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SNOWDROPS.

IDYLS FOR CHILDREN.

FROM THE SWEDISH
OF

ZACH. TOPELIUS

BY

ALBERT ALBERG





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THE SNOWBALL BATTLE.

S. Frontispiece.

SNOWDROPS.

FINLAND IDYLS FOR CHILDREN.

FROM THE SWEDISH

OF

ZACH. TOPELIUS.

BY

ALBERT ALBERG,

AUTHOR OF "FABLED STORIES FROM THE ZOO,"
AND EDITOR OF "CHIT-CHAT BY PUCK," "ROSE-LEAVES," "WOODLAND
NOTES," AND "WHISPERINGS IN THE WOOD."



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❖ SNOWDROPS. ❖

FINLAND.



AST over the fields blows
the cold breath of Boreas.

“Whence come you, im-
petuous traveller?”

“I come from the far
north — from the snowy
peaks of Lapland. I was

born yesterday, within a gloomy ravine, on the
confines of eternal snow, and am now essaying
the strength of my wings in a flight across the
plains. Yes, lad, my journey was lonesome
and protracted, for your country is both broad
and long. I must now rest awhile in the foliage
of the spruce-firs.”

“Yes, fleet wind, our land is great, you needs must rest. I stood one day on yonder lofty hill near the lake, and everywhere increasing vistas of hills and dales, woods and marshes, fields, lakes, and meadows, and homesteads expanded before my view, and my heart beat with joy that this is my native land—my own dear Finland.”

“But, poor lad,” answered the wind, “your view does not extend very far; your country is larger than can be embraced by one horizon. I rose early yesterday, just at dawn, and on the rosy wings of the morning breeze I hied across the wild and desolate wolds of Lapland. I inhaled the vapours of the marshes, and sent the snow-wreaths whirling about the antlers of the reindeers, of which a large herd stampeded across the big mere of Enarey, and made the ice crackle under the swift tread of their agile feet. I proceeded on my way, arriving at the furthest northern bourn, where the corn ripens on the banks of wild coursing streams, and I flew over sombre forests of vast extent, and calm lakes, until I reached the true home of the cranberry, and soon after to the place where rye begins to

grow ; there I listened to the fall of the axe in the woods, and the din of the waterfall as it worked the timbers into planks at the saw-mill. After which I found people began to arrange their houses into long rows, forming streets and cities, and where the vessels spread their white wings in the ports eager to fly abroad. But as yet I had not come far in your large country. I pursued my course and soon came to where the flax grows, and the nuts cluster in the hazel-trees. Then first I had reached the middle of Finland. After this I journeyed to more southern tracts, where fruit hangs on the trees in the autumn, and where lime-trees and beeches spread a cool shelter against the sun-rays. At last I arrived at this place, where thrives the oak, and where the juicy cherries ripen, and big vessels sail from shore to shore, and the genial breath of the south greets me on the sea-shore. Your country is so vast that the fleet swallows arrive three weeks earlier in the spring to their homes on the southern hills, than those of their fellows who migrate to the northern valleys ; and when, in the month of July, dark night already begins to steal over the regions where the cherry-

tree grows, you will find the nights of the far north, where the cranberry flourishes, still bright as daylight, blithe with song and joy. But, good-bye," said the wind, "I can stay no longer, for to-morrow night I mean to scatter the oranges that grow at the foot of Mount Etna ; so farewell." And he floated away on his broad wings in company with the clouds.

But I looked far off across the blue bosom of the lake, and at the dark fringing of the forest behind, and the fields and the distant hamlet with the church-spire glittering in the sunlight. I knew that the lake was multiplied into a thousand lakes, intertwined among endless forests and fields, and that hamlets and fanes were counted by the hundred ; and I repeated to myself with heartfelt joy : " Behold our country ! God must have had some hidden meaning in creating so vast and so beautiful a land. Oh, that I could solve the mystery ! "

" Easy enough," twittered the winchat from a bough quite near at hand ; " those that dwell in a great country ought to pray that their thoughts may, too, grow great ; and those that dwell in a beautiful land ought to have pure and

humble hearts ; but it can be united, for the truly great are always humble at heart."

"Now I understand," I answered, "if we suffered ourselves to be governed by pride and false ambition, and outward appearances, our country would say to us : 'I myself am simple and humble ; my pine-woods clad in eternal verdure are as plain and sombre in their attire as ancient foresters ; my mountains are primitive grey, but iron is their marrow ; my thousand lakes reflect more the splendours of heaven than of earth ; my dells and meadows bear testimony each spring to the victory of life over death ; such is true greatness—take thou example of me.' "

Yes, dear country, you are right ; I will try to emulate you. I remember a parable, though I know not who first told it ; maybe it was a soft echo from the wood against the grey hills, when the waves have fallen asleep and the stars look benignly down upon the sylvan scene. Listen to its recital.

There once lived a family of many children together, under the protection of their excellent and beautiful mother. She gathered them all

around her, and blessing them, said: "My darling little children, I love you dearly; I procure for you food and clothes, a cradle for you when small, and a home for you when you grow up; also a grave when you leave this life. I sang ballads for you when I nursed you in my lap; I guided your first steps and taught you useful knowledge. Sometimes you thought that I was a stern mother, and true it is I have not foolishly spoilt you with comfort and luxury; I have taught you to work and to endure, in order that you might gain strength both of body and soul. And now I ask you to love me even as I have loved you: work for your mother through your whole life, work and pray for her. I am poor, but you can enrich me; I am grieving, but you can gladden me; I feel chill, but you can cause my blood to glow; I dwell in darkness, but you can bring light to shine upon me. Will you promise me this my children, and I will pray God to grant you wisdom and happiness for the sake of your filial love?"

"Yes, yes," answered the children, and went all to their different avocations in life. But some of them soon grew tired of their work,

became lazy and fell asleep ; others were gay and merry, and ran in pursuit of gaudy butterflies across the pleasant meadows ; some felt ashamed of their mother's poverty, and took service with their neighbours, where they were better provided for ; yea, there were even those amongst them who were such vile traitors that they would have sold their mother's demesne to foreign buyers—like as the sons of Jacob sold their brother Joseph to the Egyptian merchants. But again, some of them worked from early dawn till nightfall, from their very childhood to their grave, for the name and happiness of their mother, and some of them even sacrificed their lives to save her from the clutches of robbers by whom she was threatened.

Again their mother called them around her saying : “ Children, I will now bestow my rewards. Those who have worked faithfully for me I will clasp to my heart ; but those who have proved faithless to their trust I must disown, even though my love prompts me to embrace you all, good and bad, without distinction, forgetting and forgiving all your wrong doings ; yet not I, but God Himself, in all His righteousness,

judges you ; His judgments I cannot alter, and lo ! behold already His angel enthroned in the heavens."

And the children looked up with dismay, and even the faithful trembled, for they saw the Book of Judgment lay opened in the sky, and an angel with radiant looks stood by and turned the leaves, at which, each time, a flash of lightning lit up the clouded heavens ; and he said to the unfaithful children : " The grief and sorrow you have caused your mother condemns you. You who have been lazy shall be steeped in poverty ; you who have been frivolous shall bitterly repent ; you who have been proud shall be despised ; you who have been false and traitorous shall be abhorred by everyone." But to the good children the angel said : " You shall become wise and happy in life, and respected after death, for your mother's blessing accompanies you throughout your lives and beyond the grave."

Then the disowned children said : " Who is our mother ? we know her not."

The angel replied : " Your native country is your great parent, of whom you were born ; she has always loved you and upon you bestowed all

her best gifts ; you have grieved your mother country, while the obedient children have brought her joy." Remember, children, your native land will witness against you both in the present and in the future.

Thus spake the parable. What say you ? Shall we choose to be the disobedient of our mother country, who return her love with grievous ingratitude ; or shall we become her obedient and grateful children, who bring joy to her heart, and who work diligently to promote her happiness ?

No, our mother country, our native land, our parent ; we will never grieve thee, we will try to deserve your love and care, we will never sell you to the covetous foreigner ; we will love you none the less for your poverty, nor spend our days in sloth when we know you need diligent workers ; we will obey your urgent call, as our forefathers have done before us ; if you are poor we will gather you wealth, when you grieve we will cheer you, when you suffer from cold we will impart a new glow to your heart with our ardent love, and when there is darkness around you we will light the lamp of truth to

guide you. Beloved mother country, we thank you for your lessons, and we will pray God to give us great thoughts. You are humble, and we will pray that we, too, may have humble hearts ; and the Lord shall hear our prayer and make us happy and wise, for the sake of our filial love.

We work our time, and thrive for awhile in your valleys like frail blossoms ; then we wither and mingle with the dust, and are succeeded by others, who work and disappear as we have done. But you, our great and noble parent, live throughout all time ; and you hoard your children's love through centuries, accumulating an imperishable treasure of hard-earned glory, which calls down upon you the blessing of the Almighty. May our love for you, our parent, ever increase ; may you grow strong and mighty ; may you become enlightened and ennobled by the pure grace of God : and then in the future you shall say also of us : " Those were my faithful children, truly have they loved Finland."

A LITTLE SCHOOLING IN THE WOOD.



ESOLATE and bleak lay a whole tract of land, for a great fire had swept over the forest, consuming all its stately trees, so that only charred stumps remained, interspersed with sooty boulder-stones, amid the patches of plains where no grass grew. For many miles in every direction the eye beheld nothing but a repetition of black tree-trunks and dingy stones. The high-road intersected this devastated country, and anybody who travelled that way during night needed a stout heart, for if he had been at all of a nervous disposition he might well have imagined the whole bleak wold full of ugly little goblins, stretching forth their knotty arms towards him. Some looked as if they had horses' heads, others antlers, and some

stood sprawling on many legs, like great monster spiders. But you know it was only the charred stumps that borrowed these fantastic shapes from murky night.

One solitary tree remained unscathed by the fire. It was a towering pine, which had reared his foliage so high that the flames had not mastered him, but had been forced to content themselves with singeing him a little on his trunk, and then had rushed by and had left him alone. This monarch of the forest stood there, the sole survivor of the battle-field; his realm was desolate, and his subjects slain, and nothing was left but stumps and stones, and that was nothing to boast over, and nothing to make of.

A small hut also remained, close by the roadside; it had been there since the days when the forest had worn its green garb, and it looked up with its little windows smiling to the pine, and the tree looked down upon his peaceful comrade as if to protect it from storm and heat, and they never grew tired of each other's company.

In the hut lived a poor old woman with her little grand-daughter called Esther, which is a biblical name. They had no relatives in the

whole world besides themselves, and the little girl had scarcely ever seen anybody else but her old grandmother and an old peasant, who used to bring the old woman flour and salt and flax, when he occasionally passed their way with his horse and cart. The old man would then get in exchange skeins of the finest and whitest thread, which the old woman had spun on her wheel. Certainly little Esther had seen many travellers pass by on the road, but they all seemed to be in a great hurry to get away from the black desolate tract, except sometimes on a sultry summer day, when the little children who journeyed that way would be thirsty, and alight from the carriage to ask for some water to drink. It was the wholesome native wine of that bleak wold, cool and clear as crystal, where it ran a solitary stream, direct from a cliff, like a liquid treasure of the mountain king, poured as a constant tribute at the foot of the forest monarch, the old pine-tree. Then little Esther would take to them water in a jar, and usually had a small coin given to her, though she never asked for anything, for she thought that God meant water to be given free to everybody.

One day, in the month of July, a carriage stopped on the road, and a gentleman alighted with a little boy, whom he held by the hand.

"Have you some water to give me?" he asked, "for Ahasuerus is very thirsty."

"Esther, go and fetch some water from the spring," said the old woman; and the little girl readily obeyed.

"Is her name Esther?" asked the traveller.

"Yes, sir, she is called Esther, in remembrance of the pious Esther in the Bible," answered the old dame. "Is your boy named Ahasuerus, sir?"

"Yes," answered the stranger; "he is called after that same Ahasuerus who took Esther for a wife. My boy may also one day become king over a large domain," said the gentleman somewhat proudly, and shook his leathern girdle so that it clinked slightly, for it was filled with golden ducats.

When little Esther brought the water he gave her a piece of gold, and she curtsied as prettily and just as deeply as she was wont to do when she received a copper coin, neither more nor less, for she had never before seen gold, and had no

idea that the tiny yellow piece, though it was so heavy for its size, could be more valuable than an ordinary copper coin.

"You are a good little girl, Esther," said the gentleman; "should you like to marry my Ahasuerus?"

She curtsied by way of reply, for she had never before heard talk of people marrying each other.

"Will you be his bride?" again asked the stranger, pursuing his pleasantry.

"Thank you kindly, sir," she replied, and she again curtsied, though she did not understand a word.

The stranger laughed heartily, and gently stroked her long flaxen hair. "How comes it that you live here quite alone in this solitary place?" he asked of the old woman.

"Alackaday, sir," she exclaimed, "there was a great forest all around here when we first came to this place, and I used to make such fine brooms and baskets of the tender roots and twigs. But one summer night a lot of peasants passed this way, and they made a fire in the wood while we were asleep, and the trees, being

very dry, for it was the hot season, easily caught the flames, and a terrible fire raged which nobody could master ; it spread throughout the big forest, and it burned night and day for three weeks, until everything was consumed, and left the stumps black and charred as you now see them. Then we became very poor, but where could we go ? here, at least, we had a shelter given us."

"But how was it that your hut was not burned, when there was a general conflagration all around ?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, I will tell you, sir," answered the old dame. "There stood four angels clad in white, one at each corner of the hut, and guarded us, so that not a spark fell upon it from the great fire. I did not see them, but my little Esther did, and I am sure they protected our home for her sake, for I am only a poor miserable sinner myself, but she is pure and innocent as the angels themselves."

The stranger stood for awhile buried in deep thought, and at last he said : "Dear old mother, will you allow Ahasuerus to stay with you for a year ? He is a rich man's son and somewhat

spoiled ; it would do him good to remain some time with poor and pious people. I am going abroad just now, and it is a very troublesome thing to take the lad with me ; but next summer I will return, and fetch him away. Here is a roll of ducats to defray the expenses."

"Voj! voj!" exclaimed the old woman, a Finnish expression of surprise, for she was quite taken aback at this proposal. But the stranger patted her on the shoulder, saying :

"Look well to the boy, and see that he suffers no want, but do not spoil him, and don't give him anything but what you give to little Esther. God bless you! Good-bye, my lad ; obey the kind old dame willingly ; try and be a good boy that she may be pleased with you, and I will come and fetch you next summer."

On saying this he entered the carriage and drove away.

This event caused great surprise in the lonely place ; even the solitary old pine seemed to ponder over the occurrence, and young Ahasuerus himself was so astonished that he was quite struck dumb with amazement ; but when the vehicle was lost to view, and he was left alone

with the old woman and Esther, he began to cry furiously, and ran after it; and when his new friends pursued him, and tried to bring him back, he flew into a violent temper, and tried to bite and kick them. At last he fell down, quite exhausted with rage, upon a small hillock, and quietly sank to sleep. Then the old dame carried him without further resistance into the hut, where he slept soundly and peacefully as a little kitten till late the following morning.

It is no easy task for a poor old woman to correct and properly bring up a boy who has been reared in luxury and spoilt by indulgent friends, and he gave her plenty to do, the little rascal! The very first time he awoke he called out impetuously for sugar-plums, and his gilded whip to set his rocking-horse a-flying, and when these things were not brought to him, he cried with vexation, and kept on until from sheer exhaustion he fell asleep again.

But time heals all sores. Ahasuerus had been scarcely three weeks in the hut before he forgot all about carriages and horses, and whip and sugar-plums, and even gave up his naughty and tiresome habit of crying for everything;

and after this time he became an obedient little lad, who felt quite happy in the poor small hut.

No doubt little Esther was the principal cause of this, for she was four years old, while he was five, and thus they suited exactly to play with each other. Esther soon brought him to her old friend the tall pine, which she called the "Greenery," as it was the only thing on the bleak wold that kept its true colour both summer and winter. The children fetched water from the sparkling streamlet of the mountain-king, and constructed sheds and castles from the stones that lay thickly scattered all around them. Sometimes they dragged charred branches and trunks home for fuel, and when they smeared themselves with the soot they had themselves to wash their own clothes. Ahasuerus grew quite fond of this mode of life the more he became used to it. Towards the latter end of the summer they found some red berries growing between the stones; and when autumn came, the old peasant who brought the flour also brought the children some turnips. During the winter they made huts of snow, and the boy was taught to make bows and little

implements ; and he used to feed the goats, for the old woman possessed two, and who rather liked the lad to pull them by the beard, whilst saying :

“ Nanny goat, and Nanny dear,
Shake your beards and never fear.”

At last spring came, and the snow melted away from the rugged cliffs, the black tree-stumps, and the sombre branches of the pine, and the mountain rill again poured its silver treasure into the granite basin. Here and there was seen a blade of green grass peeping forth from among the stones of the barren wold, and tiny little seeds of the birch and aspen and mountain-ash came gently floating on the wind, and descending, germinated in the sooty soil. The children thought that it was greener this summer than the previous one, and it was really the case. Then they began to carry fuel, and built a little castle, by the side of which they made a cattle-shed, and stocked it with cones from the old pine to represent sheep and cows, with four little sticks for legs and two for horns.

The summer arrived, and the old woman began to expect the return of Ahasuerus' father,

but weeks and months passed and he was neither seen nor heard of. Time waned ; autumn and winter came and passed ; a new spring heralded a new summer ; but still the traveller came not. Years fled hastily on, and the old woman grew more aged and infirm ; the children rapidly grew up ; but still the stranger returned not. And now the old woman gave up all thoughts of his ever coming back. Fortunately she still possessed most of the golden ducats, for she continued to spin, and only bought new clothes for Ahasuerus when he actually needed them. She taught the children to read the Bible, and the two young plants grew up like two hardy saplings in the wilderness.

But time had wrought wonders even on the desolate wold during these years. The sunshine spread over it the blessing of God ; the entire district which formerly had lain black, gloomy, and desolate, now began to reassume a verdant aspect, and the little shoots that had grown from the small seeds, brought thither by the wind, grew taller every year, and extended far and wide as a young wood, with all the swaying tree-tops of equal height. The old pine again

felt happy and comfortable, and the wind assisted his branches to articulate to the small trees :

“That’s right, youngsters; try to emulate each other, and grow tall and straight, and bask yourselves in God’s glorious sunlight; let your old godfather have cause to feel proud of you.”

This the sapling trees listened to, and did their best, joyously exulting in their adolescence, and the winged songsters of the young wood began to sing and nestle among their boughs.

Then it occurred to Esther and Ahasuerus to play at keeping school for the young trees, to teach them how to read. They seated themselves with the Bible in the middle of a copse and began spelling out the Holy Writ for the edification of the growing wood; and the trees seemed to listen attentively, and began to whisper all around their children-teachers with the thousand tongues of the rustling leaves, and the more the babes gave out of the text the more intense and earnest became the whisperings among the foliage. This pleased the children immeasurably. The Bible lay open on their knees, and before them lay open the great book of Nature, and they endeavoured to transfuse the

teachings of righteousness from the one to the other. There never was seen a better behaved school; the stripling trees were all attention, the forest flowers nodded joyous assent, the birds sang their hymns of praise, and the old pine pondered over the sacred lessons, and the great grimy mountain itself sunk in deep devotion listening to the earnest promulgation of the children's creed.

The travelling stranger had never returned. Ahasuerus, who now was a big lad, was sent to school himself at a neighbouring town, but was loath to leave Esther and his forest home which had grown so dear to him; but when the summer came he returned for his holidays.

Years passed on, and the boy became a student, assuming the name of Wold, because he had been reared in the wilderness. He was now twenty years of age, when one day something remarkable occurred. It happened on a beautiful summer day, fifteen years after the commencement of this story, that an old gentleman came journeying along the road which formerly had led through the devastated land; but he looked around in astonishment, for

everything was now changed, and far more beautiful than before. The young wood, like a rich dress, had covered the whole tract with living green, and it was with great difficulty the traveller could recognise the hut where it lay encircled by the rich foliage. He alighted from his carriage, and approached the hut with beating heart, to inquire after the old woman. A tall and beautiful girl met him ; it was Esther, but he did not recognise her. She brought him to her grandmother, who was seated in a corner of the fire-place, infirm and dim-sighted from old age. The stranger questioned her regarding a little boy, called Ahasuerus, and whether he was still alive. His voice trembled as he spoke, and he wiped the perspiration from his brow with a large silk handkerchief.

The old woman knew at once it was the stranger come at last to take from her Ahasuerus, her dearly-loved lad, and tears came thick, and her voice was choked with emotion, so that she could not answer. Esther, too, was in tears, for she felt what was coming, but she answered at once that Ahasuerus would soon return, for he had only gone into the woods

for a few hours' shooting. The stranger kissed her on her forehead, and embracing the old dame, thanked her heartily, while tears filled his eyes. He was a merchant who had travelled far away in foreign lands, even as far as the other side of the Globe, where he had fallen into the hands of pirates, who had kept him captive many years, but at last he had managed to make his escape, and now intended to remain in his native land, and, blessed with great wealth, spend the rest of his life in peace and quiet.

In a short time Ahasuerus returned from the sport with a bag of hares and ptarmigan. It may easily be imagined what joy and astonishment was expressed by him when he thus, quite unexpectedly, found his long-lost father, whom he had long ago abandoned all hope of ever seeing again.

The welcome stranger remained three days in the hut, and a long consultation ensued as to what had now best be done. Ahasuerus had a long-cherished plan, to which, after his father had well considered it, he gave his consent.

The same summer the whole of the formerly devastated district was bought by the old

merchant, and several hundred men were set to work to blast the granite, lay foundations, and build up habitations. In one short year was erected a large and beautiful mansion, which might almost have been termed a princely palace, and all around lay scattered a great number of small log-houses, all painted dark red, and in which lived the thrifty labourers with their wives and children. Into the large manor removed, first of all, the old merchant, and shortly afterwards Ahasuerus and Esther, who had now become man and wife, but the old woman could not be persuaded upon to remove; she preferred to remain in her old hut, only now, with this difference, that it was made much warmer and more comfortable than before.

And they are all still alive and happy, and Ahasuerus has really become King over the great realm of the far-extending wold, which now has been transformed into a fertile land of fields and meadows, interspersed with thriving hamlets, which all gladden the eye of the beholder. The old pine-tree remains ever verdant and sombre, and musing as of yore, while at his foot the mountain-king is pouring his silver

treasure adown, a beautiful cascade, and all around are still growing up flourishing stripling trees, the docile school-mates of Esther and Ahasuerus.

I recently journeyed that way, and I wish you had accompanied me. The old dame was seated, grey with old age, basking in the sunshine in front of her cherished hut, and the old merchant, now no longer a stranger, was seated on the grassy bank by her side, reading aloud from the Bible. Ahasuerus was just returning from a run to the big fen, which he had transformed into a glorious corn-field, and Esther, smiling and happy, was seated on the doorstep, in company with her two darling little children.

"You see, my little loves," she said; "here all around us is the great beautiful wood which your father and I, when we were little children, taught to read the Holy Writ. God has opened as well a great book in his marvellous creation. His everlasting love and His wise commands are not only given in the pages of the Bible, but are repeated throughout the wide world. The summer verdure is but another page; His holy

Word is readable on every leaf, living or withered ; His love in the cool crystal spring ; His wisdom in the ever-rolling billows of the sea ; His glory pierces the veiling clouds. Look how the young wood again bows in the morning breeze ! What think you it means ? Grateful nature is praising and adoring God ! ”



THE CHURCH BELLS.



HARK ! the chimes of the glorious crystal-toned bells, which ring the dead to rest, and call the living to pray to the Lord, whose omnipresence is felt in the sacred aisles, and throughout the universe. List to the chimes calling to prayer and peace, liquid tones at which your heart rejoices. How the mellow silver voices travel through the clear summer air ! dissolving into soft cadences over land and sea. When you are listening to them, whether they are ringing in joy or sorrow, be sure you thank God from the very depths of your heart, because He always says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock ; come to Me." What do the church bells call out from time to time, if not, "Come, come to God ! you poor lost child, return to God" ?

Their mellow tones quaver through the blue ether, and fill your heart with delight, like the genial sunshine, and every other good from above. Listen, therefore, to the bells, and treasure the emotions they awaken in your breast, and their voice will bring a blessing to you, whether they ring out a joyous peal, or sound your funeral knell.

I know an old church, where it is situated I leave you to imagine ; it was far smaller than any built now-a-day, and it was constructed of huge jagged stones, so big that it is really a marvel how people in those times could have managed to place such massive blocks one on the top of the other. It had a very steep roof, where jackdaws chattered and nestled in the clinks, and small low windows with stained glass, a reminiscence of the times when Finland professed the Popish religion ; there also hung grand old paintings, but so dark and maltreated by the unsparing hand of time, that the colours could no longer be distinguished ; and there also were images of the virgin and the child, and the twelve apostles carved in wood, some of which had once upon a time been gilded, but whose

brows were now covered with cobwebs, and had only a little faded gold tingeing their long beards. What is adorable ought not to be bedecked in gold and moulten images, but worshipped in spirit with the ardour of faith.

That the church was very old was indubitable, for nobody could tell when it had been built. Generation after generation went to sleep the sleep of death under its shade, but the one had known no more about it than the other. When anybody asked how old the church was, the answer was generally that "It was as old as the hills, out of which giants had constructed it." An answer which made nobody any wiser. But the church bells had stories of their own. The spire was so tall that it was said, "If anybody mounted the weather-cock and balanced himself on tiptoe, he would behold seven other vanes in the neighbouring parishes." The belfry stood close by, but was very much smaller, for you know two great ones never agree long together in one place. It was a timber erection, painted dark red, and had actually been removed thither on rollers, which was thought such a remarkable feat that it was talked of for ages. In it were

hung two bells, called the big one and the little one ; the big bell, like the church, was so old, that no one knew when it first had chimed ; on it was inscribed a verse from the Bible, also the name of the maker, which is but right ; for when one is dead, one's memory lives alone in what one has caused to be done when alive. The big bell had had strange adventures during the troublous times of war, 150 years ago. It had been secreted at the bottom of the lake to save it from the greed of the foes ; but those who had sunk it in the water had all died before peace was proclaimed, so that no one could tell the place where it was to be found. The inhabitants of the district were but poor people, and could not afford to get new bells cast. They dragged all about the lake, but the lost treasure was not recovered ; there was only one person in the whole parish who had any idea where the big bell was to be found, and that was little Eliza, the sexton's daughter, but then she was only six years old. Her father lived on the strand, and sometimes on a Sunday morning in summer-time she used to push herself from the shore in a small wherry, and glide slowly over the placid waters of

the lake, and then she fancied she could hear the liquid tones of the bell reaching her from the deep. She told this when she came home, but sensible people only smiled at such childish fancies. However, it happened early in the morning of one midsummer day, just as the sun rose above the dark pine-tree forest, on the other side of the lake, that little Eliza in her boat plainly heard the bell chime more distinct than ever, and her father, the sexton, came with men in a large boat, and found the bell at last, and brought it on shore to the delight of all, and soon it hung in the belfry, which they hastened to build for that purpose. Ever since that time, the bell has rung out with clear sonorous voice; but its mellowest tones vibrate through the air, when it tolls the funeral of a good man departed, for bells are also touched with emotion when they are made of true metal, and mingle their joy with the holy angels that a soul has returned to heaven.

The little bell had also a history of its own, though not so romantic. When the war was at an end, the congregation again gathered in the old church; no bell called them to prayer and

worship, for at this time the big bell lay all forgotten in the lake. Where was the money to come from to buy a new bell? All the male members of the congregation were quite perplexed, and scratched themselves behind the ears a hundred times, which is the approved fashion among country-folks when they are in a dilemma, or wish to consider a proposal thoroughly. But it was for the wives and daughters to hit upon the right plan; they agreed to spin and weave to make money, and so the spinning-wheels whizzed round night and day, and the dilligent shuttle darted to and fro like an arrow. Through and through the fine warp it went, and thus were woven many hundred ells of beautiful linen, and the eager workers thought it would surely suffice to buy a bell.

Poor and simple people! they knew not that the metal was so expensive, and the master-hand to cast the bell, perhaps, even more so. When they took the produce of their industry to a maker at Stockholm, he offered them in exchange only a small bell, such as is used on board ships to call the crew together when the mess is ready, and the cook stands ready for action with his big

ladle in the doorway of his domain. What was to be done? They could not for shame hang a mess-bell in the belfry.

At this time there reigned a queen in Sweden, called Ulrica Eleanora, and it came to her august ears about the proposed barter of the linen for the bell. The story pleased her very much, that her subjects in Finland, of her own sex, were so enterprising. She immediately ordered her maids of honour to spin and weave as well, and even spun herself. It is very likely that the aristocratic ladies tossed their proud heads a little at the idea, but in those days many things were accomplished which would now be impossible.

All which by these means were spun and woven the queen bought, and at once sent the money to the bell-foundry. Thus was procured a bell at last, which was nearly as large as the big one, and of course far brighter; and when for the first time it sent out its metal peal, all the women wept for very joy, and all the girls folded their diligent hands together, and all from their innermost hearts thanked God and their gracious queen; but what they themselves had effected,

they did not think it worth while to give a thought to.

And now for the history of the little girl Eliza. Her father was a big sturdy man, and held the offices of sexton and bell-ringer to the church. On Sundays, when he had opened the church doors, he left the congregation to take care of itself, while he proceeded with measured steps to the belfry. Hey! how the big bells wagged to and fro when he jumped on to the cross-beam above it. Then little Eliza used to creep silently after him up the steep stairs. At first she was scolded for such adventurous daring, but she soon got so accustomed to it, that she heedlessly mounted, never once looking around, and when quite up she used to sit and look up and watch the big ponderous bell swaying to and fro, increasing in speed, and how the mighty clapper moved, like the pendulum of some giant clock, and, bang! as it touched the side of the bell, calling into life a clear strong tone that rang far and wide, a message of joy and welcome in the summer air. Higher, higher, rocked the big bell, until it nearly stood upside down, and then it trembled, as if hesitating whether to remain

erect or come down again, but with a loud tone decided for the latter, and then swayed up on the opposite side.

Hey ! and hi ! the belfry shook with excitement, and the din and noise was so great, that the walls might have been expected to have burst asunder from the commotion of sound.

But immediately below the yellowish and grey-tinted big bell, was seated on a low stool the little flaxen-haired girl, silent and smiling, and so happy, never dreaming for one moment that the huge monster might tumble down and cover her over like a mouse in a bushel, or, perhaps, kill her on the spot, crushing her into an unrecognisable heap.

Eliza loved her bells with that true affection with which we cherish what is dearest to us in life next to God, and the chosen of our heart.

"Take care, child !" said the father ; "when one listens too frequently to the din of the bells, one becomes deaf in time."

"What does that mean ? " asked Eliza.

"It means," answered her father, "that your ears no longer hear all the beautiful sounds in the world, such as the swell of the hymns, the

song of the birds, nor what people speak ; but you find yourself surrounded by a deep silence, which like the stillness of the grave appals your very soul ! ”

“ Can the deaf people hear the bells ring ? ” queried Eliza.

“ Well,” answered he, “ I believe most people can hear the bells peal.”

“ Then they needn’t be sorry,” opined the little girl.

Things turned out as her father had said ; for as Eliza grew older, the world grew more silent around her. She was wont to hear the buzz of the gnats in the wood in the summer-time, but she thought she could also hear the ringing of church bells from afar. Gradually every sound to her had the semblance of the clang of the bells ; the very twitterings of the birds in the branches of the birches, the din of the waterfall, and the merry laughter of the youths when they played together of an evening, all rang in her ears with the metallic resonance of bells ; and yet she could not keep from them. Soon everybody noticed that Eliza was deaf, and this affliction grieved her father deeply, and the people sympathised with

him, for there was not a better or gentler girl in the parish ; but there was no help for it, and it was soon forgotten. Only when the little girl meekly and quietly wended her accustomed way to the bell-tower, then people who saw her would say, " There goes the sexton's little girl, who hears nothing in the world but the ringing of bells ! "

Eliza was ten years old by this time, and played as children of her age are accustomed to do ; but her playthings were the big bells in the belfry, she petted them as if they had been her dolls, and rubbed them until they were quite bright, and she would allow no dust to remain on them. She gave them pet names too: " Great Gold," and " Little Gold." She chid them if they rang out of tune, and praised them when she was pleased with their peals. She talked to them, and they answered her with their sonorous voices, and she understood their language better than that of her fellow-creatures ; how else could she, when she could hear no one but them !

I do not relate to you Eliza's life because it was in any way chequered, or that any extraordinary adventures befell her ; on the contrary,

her days passed as monotonously as they generally do for people living in peaceful country-places. I only wish to speak of her because the bells had succeeded in drawing her nearer to God in the days of her childhood, and, therefore, I wish her memory to be associated with the church bells.

The more the din and noise of life died away, and as it were the doors of the outer world closed against her, that she could hear nothing but the urgent call of her chiming friends repeating, "Come to God! Come to God!" the more eagerly turned she her thoughts to heaven and to a sanctified life through Him who died on the cross, and the actual world around her appeared to her a mere dream or vision; while the spirit of God alone stood clear before her soul, as the ideal of love and righteousness, adored throughout creation. In the daily intercourse of her home-life she was meek and smiling, and ever ready to assist others, and she went quietly about those duties, working harder than anyone else: but the yearnings of her heart, the true joy of her soul, lay not in that direction. Her inner life was like a calm water, which on its quiet bosom reflects the

glories of heaven, whether the lustrous light of day or the starry writ of night.

The music of the bells lingered in her ears for ever, as, indeed, it does with everyone, only they don't give heed to it.

"I never could make out what bewitched that little bell the morning you were carried to the font," said her father. "I never heard it ring with such clear silver tones before; had it been the big bell, now, I could have told the cause, for I know it is from the old popish times, and there is silver mixed with the metal, for my father told me that an old image from Rome had been melted down for the purpose; and there's witchcraft in that bell, I can tell it by the way it tolls at funerals: every time a miser or a knave is brought to his last home, it makes such a rattling, whining noise and clangour, as nearly to make me believe it is cracked; but when it tolls for the departure of a righteous soul, it sounds with quite another tone, plaintive and mellow as a prayer or a hymn. You will hear that yourself one day, child, when it is tolling for you! What nonsense I talk, to be sure," added the sexton; "as if anybody could hear his own funeral knell!"

Eliza saw by the motion of his lips what he said, and answered meekly and kindly, as was her wont :

“ The bells know what they are about, I think, and you should not blame them for witchcraft, Father.”

When a righteous soul departs this life, he clings to the tones of his church bells, and on them ascends to heaven, and the freed spirit imparts his own holy beauty to the tones that with silvery wings of music soar through the blue sky, away to God.

“ Well, well, we shall at least hear their silver tones Whitsunday next, at your confirmation,” said the bell-ringer.

Whitsunday arrived, Eliza was now sixteen years of age, and would for the first time partake of the Lord’s supper, together with other youthful members of the congregation. Her father wished to send out more beautiful peals than ever that day, and to this wish the bells chimed in most harmoniously.

It was a bright sunny morning, the very childhood of the summer, when all nature stood fresh and blooming to celebrate the festive season.

The bells sent out their sacred greeting, which chimed more devotionally than ever, for in so clear and deep-toned a voice they had never called before ; and all the people who on the paths and roads were wending their way to church, carrying their shoes in their hands, and their hymn-books wrapped in the handkerchiefs, quickened their steps, exclaiming, “ The bells are more beautiful than ever to-day ! ”

In the church swelled the praises of hymns, and the youths for confirmation were ranged in long rows in front of the altar ; a pious servant of the Lord administered the service, and he invoked the blessing of his Master on the lives of the young men and maidens, who, kneeling, with sobs and tears of holy devotion, partook of the feast of commemoration. Last of all stepped forth Eliza : she was the only one who did not hear the solemn hymns, nor the blessings from the altar ; she only heard the ringing of bells, but that was both hymn and blessing to her. She read the inspired words on the lips of the pastor and treasured them in her heart, and she thanked the Lord most fervently of all, and to this hour her thoughts in after

years reverted as the happiest moments of her life.

Two years after this came Eliza's wedding-day, and her bridegroom was the son of the parish clerk, who often had assisted her father in ringing the little bell, while she had sat knitting in the belfry.

"Hey! to-day I shall ring with joy and power," called out the sexton, and felt so merry he could have capered about like a boy, if he had not been too old. "Take care," he said to a neighbour, who for the time rang the smaller bell, "take care that the skirt of your coat comes not between the bell and its tongue, for then it will crack, and Queen Ulrica Eleanora would turn herself in her grave for grief. Hey, here it goes for a merry peal!" and with that he jumped with his whole might on to the cross-beam, and the bell swung straight upside down, and sent out a clear joyous tone that rang over hill and dale, "Bim, boom! Ding, dong!" and on went the merry peals in unusual glee announcing the bridal party, which, headed by the village fiddler, was proceeding to church.

Eliza wore a wreath and a small crown, both

of myrtle, and a veil falling down behind, as is the accepted custom at these weddings, and she heard, of course, nothing but the peals of the bells, but she felt so happy.

One more year passed, and she carried her first-born child to the church to be baptised, and again her old friends, the bells, were sending out joyous peals, and she heard nothing but their gladsome tidings, but her eyes had their full delight when they lit upon her smiling babe, and the church bells told in the sunny Sunday morning of a mother's pure joy, to all who understood their merry voices.

Again a few years passed on, and then Eliza brought her first-born to be embedded in his early grave. There lay the little one, so pale and motionless, with a wreath of green leaflets on his white coffin, and the poor mother wept bitter tears and the bells tolled mournfully in the dull autumn day: their plaintive tones vibrated through the air, sweetly as a child's prayer, but with sorrowful tones, telling of a bright hope that had come to grief, and of the bitter disappointment felt when a young life is called away.

More years passed on, and the day arrived when the sexton's daughter in her turn brought her eldest daughter to the communion-table, and the bells sent out their peals of welcome as of yore, and the summer again stood attired in the dainty verdure of its childhood, and listened to the sympathetic tones of the well-known bells: the happy mother listened with all her soul to them, and shed tears of joy.

The years coursed on, in their ceaseless career, and gathered many of the old generation to the abode of their forefathers, while children and youths grew up and took the places of those who had withered and faded away, and the church bells continued to chime and toll in joy or sorrow.

Eliza saw her father, the sexton, lowered into his last resting-place; she wept over the bier of her loving husband, and she laid in the churchyard four of her children, and she followed thither many a friend from the days of her youth; but she also brought her daughter to the church to be married, and, by-and-by, little grandchildren to the font to be christened, and each time she heard the bells ring, and she

thanked God in her heart for the trials as well as the joys of her life.

At last a Christmas arrived when Eliza had grown old and grey, and seated surrounded by her children's children, and appeared to them a dear relic of times long gone by and buried in the past.

She thought of her own childhood, when Christmas-time was looked forward to long before it came, and she asked her children to take her to the church early on the Christmas-day when the special service of the "Yule-wake" is being celebrated, commencing the Christmas festivities. They reluctantly consented, for fear of the extreme cold, but they respected her wish, and brought her out on the morn in question, when the stars sparkled brilliantly in the dark, through the crisp frosty air, and lit up the snowy road.

The sledges hied along the road, and the tiny bells tinkled merrily when shaken by the eager horses. The wayfarers approached the church, which was brightly illumined and shed coloured streaks of light through the stained windows, like the dawn of a new day.

Eliza heard once more her dear old bells

ringing out their welcome, and she thought their tones the most beautiful of anything in the world, and heaved a grateful sigh, which, in the frosty winter morning, on star-lit wings sought and found its way to God.

On entering the church she turned round in amazement and delight to her grandchildren, who led her by the hand, exclaiming, "I hear the hymn!" and they wondered to themselves what it could mean, that their grandmother heard the hymns which she had not been able to do since she was ten years of age.

When the service was over and the bells again began to ring, she remained seated, with her hands folded in prayer, but they soon found that her soul had been gently withdrawn from the tottering frame into the realms of bliss.

And her friends said to one another, "It is plain now why she could hear the hymns this morning," for they knew that when the dawn of eternal day breaks in upon the wayfaring soul, the spirit of the righteous perceives in the last moments what it has not been able to see or hear in a whole lifetime, for it now stands on the threshold of the bright kingdom of truth.

And the bells tolled once more, this time the funeral knell of her who had loved them so well, and during almost her whole lifetime had never heard anything else but their voices. They now chimed their most sonorous tones, and their silver sounds vibrated through the clear winter air as if to breathe a blessing over her, and the people who had gathered in the churchyard folded their hands in deep devotion, saying, "Hark! how beautifully the bell tolls for the old sexton's daughter. How sweet and touching it is when the church bells ring for the departure of a good soul!"





THE WEATHERCOCK.

NOW here is rather a marvellous little story, which might be called "The Fall of Pride," but everybody is at liberty to draw what moral he likes from it. Proud many a one is, and when, too, of no more importance than a worm; how much more likely, then, to be proud when one is vain by nature and vane by name.

I knew a weathercock, perched on the tall spire of a village church. Where he had been bred, and how he had reached that exalted position, is not easy to tell; some said he was not even of the progeny of the fighting-cock, but that his dad was a crafty carpenter, who knew how to fashion eagles and dragons and the like from inanimate wood, and it was thought that his parent had shaped him from a great deal timber, and had then

hauled him aloft with a long rope, since he was a great deal too lazy to fly anywhere himself.

That might have been the truth, or perhaps he had formerly been the cock of the walk in the poultry-yard of the potent fairy Queen Gilimi-wadolga, and in his pride had rebelled against his royal mistress, who had punished him by transforming him into a wooden weathercock, and transfixed him to his elevated position, exposed to all weathers; nobody can tell. But there he sat for ever on the top of the spire, higher than the tallest roof or tree-top for many miles around. He was perched so high that the world beneath him seemed not much bigger than a pancake, and the people appeared like flies which crawled about to taste the sugar on it. He saw them running about for a little time, and then they were hurried away by the great fly-net which fell upon them like a pall.

The weathercock was of an immense size; he had, of course, a great topknot glaring scarlet; his eyes were green, and large like dinner plates, and he boasted a wide-spread tail; he might have held a bushel of corn, such a big glutton was he! And his pride! it really capped every-

thing ; because, forsooth, he was so grand, and perched so high, he thought there was nobody like him in the world. All cocks are conceited, that is quite plain by their manners. Only look at one, when on a dust-heap and stretching his neck, he crows, "Look at me ! what a fine fellow am I ! who are you ?" But the weather-cock was really the worst of them all ! Aye, but there is always a fall in store somewhere for pride. Many an arrogant highflyer of a cock has had his proud neck chopped off, and has been plucked, cooked, and demolished, like any other common bird, only that he wanted sauce and cucumber and preserves to make his tough old flesh palatable. I don't know that the weather-cock might not be aware of the fact that he could not be plucked or cooked or eaten, and that maybe made him more presumptuous than other cocks. He had a talent which is very common in this world, that of perpetually changing about, just as the wind blew, and in consequence he turned round and round and had a comfortable survey of everything ; but wherever he glared with his monstrous green eyes, he never saw his equal on the face of the earth ; he

therefore became of opinion that he was superior to everybody else, and that everybody ought to be his subjects, and he thought to himself: "I am a grand cock! a sovereign cock! elevated so high, there is none to equal me. I am the cock of cocks! their majesty supreme! I verily believe the church was specially built for my sake, to afford me a place elevated enough for my high position and rank in life! Why do the people assemble here on Sundays, if not to look at and admire me? Well, really and truly, I am *the* cock, and no mistake!"

But grand people sometimes find time drag wearily on, and so did our cock. He could not fly, he never dreamt of work, and he needed never to think about his dinner; but what could he do to wile away his tedious existence. He could not help feeling a little envy as he glanced at the vicar's poultry, which sometimes ventured as far as to the foot of the tower, and kicked up the mould searching for worms.

One day a crow, in her straight flight, chanced to pass close to the weathercock, who sat there cross and sulky, aggravating himself to think "that anyone dared to fly as high as he had

deigned to perch, and presuming on coming to a level with him.

"Quah, quah," said the crow, "how do you do, old cock?" "Whir-r-r!" whizzed the vane, and quickly turned his back upon the impudent old crow, taking advantage of the prevailing wind.

"You might at least have addressed me as 'your Excellency!'"

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed the crow. "Well, be it so. Don't 'your Excellency' find it rather tedious there, sitting so lonely at such an altitude, and with nothing to do? Why don't 'your Excellency' get married?" inquired the old bird.

"I marry!" yelled the vane. "The chicken is not yet hatched that I could make my mate without injury to my fame and position!"

"Your Excellency is right," answered the crow, "for I never knew or heard of hens holding high church livings, but your Excellency might do a little work. I do; and I feel it makes the time pass pleasantly, and keeps the spirits in high feather."

"Work!" snarled the cross-grained old weathercock, and glared at the crow with inex-

pressible contempt: "Grand Seigniors of an exalted position like myself never work; 'tis beneath us."

"Oh, indeed," thought the crow to herself as she flew away, "you may glare with your cock-eye all around you, master, and remain perfectly ignorant of the ways of the world. I have seen many grand and exalted personages have more to do, and more troubles than the lowly ones; but high-flown swaggerers like you believe that true greatness consists in not doing a ha'porth of anything, and are too lazy to move, allowing others to be their servants, and then they get the spleen from sheer *ennui*. It is evident that the fool of a vane must be several hundred years old, or he wouldn't have such antiquated notions; but now-a-days people know better, and that everybody must work, and diligently too, if they want to feel happy and contented. But the old cock can't see it, because he is too lazy, yes, even to crow, and thinks work is beneath his dignity."

And that was the real truth: the old weather-cock prided himself on being aristocratically indolent; and besides was inflated with conceit. For centuries he had revolved on the very tiptop

of the church, and had never drawn a straw to the stack, but had always remained a silent member in those upper regions, though he might have been expected to have expressed something ; and when he wouldn't move out of his place to give a new cock a chance to crow—no, he would not move an inch for anybody except the wind—then you may fancy how lazy he was. He remained where he was with the air of a prelate, because, forsooth, he imagined he belonged to the church, or rather, that the church belonged to him. Perhaps a sound whipping might have done him good, but who would have ventured upon such heresy ? besides which, he was a blockhead after all, and too thick-skinned to have felt it.

We shall hear in the sequel what befell him.

One day when he sat stolidly staring as usual into the blue void, pretending he was in deep thought, though in reality he was as brainless as ever, he was surprised to find a great crowd of people had gathered around the church. “What is the matter ?” thought he ; “it isn't Sunday to-day ?” The puzzle was soon explained ; the celebrated rope-dancer Karamatti had suspended

a rope from the church tower to the belfry. A little boy and a little girl were dancing together on the extended line, performing wonderful and graceful motions. "Oh!" thought the vane, "is it nothing else? I fancied it might be some new festivity that the stupid people had invented in my honour."

Young Karamatti suddenly threw a kiss to the multitude, and climbed with the agility of a monkey up the steep spire, in which great spikes were driven since olden times, and on which the little fellow fearlessly proceeded higher and higher until he had nearly reached the vane.

"Indeed, is that your intention?" thought the crusty old cock, his green cantankerous old eyes glowing with rage. But the lithe Karamatti was undaunted. Before the cock had time to say "Booh!" the youngster threw himself with a bold swing right astride his back, and lustily shouted, "Hey ho! fly away, old cock!"

The staring eyes of the old bird nearly started out of their sockets, for he considered himself dreadfully insulted, inflated as he was with pride, and deeming none his equal in the whole world, and now this little rascal of a tumbler had

actually mounted him as if he had been a rocking-horse, and mocking him with, "Go it old cock-eye, stretch out your wings and fly away, I am game, hey! Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

The old weathercock expected that the whole church would have tumbled down overwhelmed with such awful impudence, but the church seemed quite unconcerned, and the vane now began in an agony of humiliation to turn round in all directions. What could he do? He had always been too lazy to fly or crow, and he had therefore to endure the insult of being top-ridden himself, and to hear the crowd below shout, "Bravo! well-done!" for they thought it excellent fun to see the agile little boy astride the pompous old weathercock.

Be sure of it, when anyone grows lazy or proud in this world, there always comes along some young Karamatti and crows over him; it is the way of the world, and a very good way too!

But the old weathercock grew not a bit the wiser for all this. He remained in his elevated position for many a year: generation after generation sang their hymns of praise in the old church below, lived their allotted time, and then

returned to dust ; their children grew up, sang the same old hymns in the same old church ; but the old cock kept his place, as indolent and lofty as ever, and secretly hoping that some great good fortune would befall him for the sake of his grand position. Perhaps he would be regilded, that he might vie with the sun himself in golden splendour ; or, may be, he speculated on being elected Sultan of all the poultry in existence. Well, who can tell ? he waited and waited patiently, but the great stroke of luck somehow never came.

The vain old thing at last reached the senility of old age, and began to decay so fast, that the wind succeeded in tearing big bits out of his trunk, as if he had been an ordinary old fowl plucked by the cook. One day when there blew quite a storm, a powerful gust hurried to the church, growled, snarled, and snorted at the frail old vane, and at last after some tugging brought him away headlong through the air down to the sea-shore. There he repented, for the first and last time, giddy as he was with the unexpected flight from his dizzy throne, that he had not learnt to fly or even crow, for if he had ever

taken the trouble to master those acquirements he never would have been blown into the water, but instead could have flown straight to the town-hall and perched there, and crowed until the aldermen and the whole town had been aroused and come to his rescue. But now he was clean blown into the sea, and the big waves sported impertinently with him, and the pike and perch gaped for very wonder at beholding such an ugly old monster ; at last the disgusted waves flung him ashore, and there he lay, a helpless wreck, a sorry image of pride.

On the strand stood a small hut, in which lived an old woman and her two children, a boy and a girl. The children often amused themselves by constructing little dams and docks, in and out of which the little fishes darted as in merry sport. When the little children went rambling along the shore in quest of suitable stones for their play, they found the poor old weathercock in sad plight ; the jolly billows had clean washed away all his gaudy colouring, and he had fought with the stones in the shallow water of the strand until he had lost both his beak and well-spread tail.

The children upon seeing him said : “ Mother always complains that the crows and sparrows do such damage to our garden things, but now we have found a help for that ; here’s a splendid

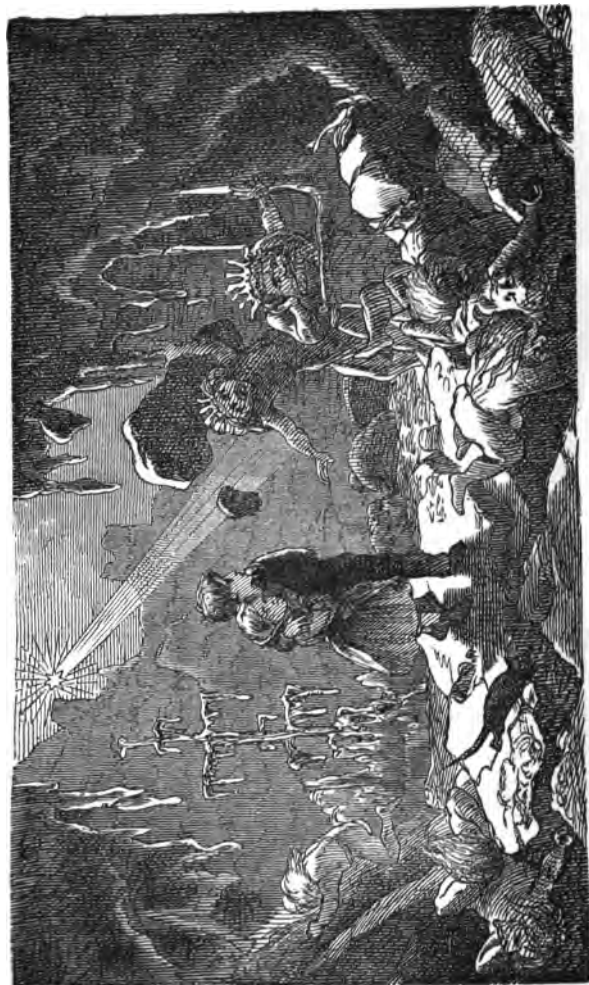


scarecrow ! let us get a line and drag this big old monster up to the beans and peas.” And thus the proud weathercock, in his old age, became perched on a pole to serve as a scare-

crow, instead of being gilded and proclaimed grand Sultan of all the poultry in the world. Then it happened that the crow, who in the days of his prosperity had addressed him as "your Excellency," came flying up intending to have a "bean-feast," for that is a festival crows always try their very hardest to keep, but "heugh," she saw the horrid scarecrow, and scrambled away again in hot haste, but in her flight she could not keep from looking back, and recognising her old acquaintance, said, "Quah; quah! Dear me, your Excellency has become a scarecrow at last! What did I tell you? pride is sure to have a fall."

"Hold your gab!" croaked a sensible old raven who sat perched on a pine-stump close by. "The poor old cock has been lazy and vain, and therefore he has met with reverses; but remember, he is now old and wretched, and so ought not to be railed at, but pitied! Nobody knows what may befall himself in his old age."

The old weathercock heard all this, but could make no answer, for he had no beak, and was pierced by a knotty old pole, and there I think he remains to this day.



THE DREAM OF YULE.

THE DREAM OF YULE.



N that pretty little house yonder, at the corner of the street, last Christmas there was lighted up a large Christmas-tree, hung with tinsel stars, confectionary, and rosy apples; thick tallow candles, dipped so as to form three branches on one stem, typical of the Holy Trinity, burned brilliantly on the table. It was found quite impossible to keep the children within quiet bounds; every time anything rustled in the hall, or the doors creaked, they were at once all alive. When expectation was at its height, the Christmas or yule-goat (a man dressed up for the occasion in a turned fur coat, and with two horns on his head) entered, and asked if the children had been "well-behaved" during the past year, at which everybody at once cried out, "Yes, yes!"



Fred turned quickly round on his heel, saying, "What a poor Christmas this will be ! the bogies in the mountains have got a better yule than that."

And Lotty in her turn began to whine, saying, "Shall I only get fifteen Christmas-boxes to-night then ? the goblins themselves will have a far better treat than that on their yule-night."

"You think so," said the now provoked yule-goat. "I will take you there this moment, that you may judge for yourselves," and he grasped Fred and Lotty, each by the hand, and dragged them away with him, though they struggled to remain. Hi and hu ! how they were whisked through the air ! Before they had time to think, they found themselves in the midst of a dark forest covered with snow ; they felt so cold and miserable, as they waded through it, and ugh ! how it drifted and whirled about their ears and eyes, so that they could scarcely see the tall fir-trees which barred the way everywhere in the dark night, and they heard at intervals the hideous howls of wolves. The yule-goat, ah ! he had already disappeared, he had no time to waste upon them, he had so much to do, calling yet

to-night on many kind good little children, far better and kinder than Fred and Lotty !

The children now began to cry loudly, but the more they yelled, the more the wolves howled around them.

"Come along, Lotty," said Fred, "we must try to find our way to some hut in the forest."

"I think I can see a light away there amongst the trees," said the girl ; "let us go to it."

"Oh ! that isn't a light," rejoined Fred, "it is only the icicles glistening among the trees !"

"I fancy I can see a great big mountain !" said Lotty. "What if it be Rastekais, to which the little Lapp boy rode on a wolf one Christmas night !"

"That can't be possible," replied Fred, "for Rastekais lies at least 500 miles away from our home. Let us get up on the top of that mountain and try to get a better view."

They waded through the cold snow-drift, across fallen tree-trunks, pushed through the brushwood, and after a while arrived at the foot of the mountain. They then descried something that resembled a streak of light, issuing from a narrow aperture ; they proceeded in its direction and

came to a cleft, and then, quite dismayed, they found they had really arrived at Rastekais, for they were surrounded by gnomes and dwarfs. It was too late to turn back, besides which, outside howled the wolves, and they even poked their noses into the very entrance of the mountain-cave.

Fred and Lotty remained timidly quiet, where they stood looking at the yule-revels, which the sprites were holding in the large cave. There were thousands of them, but all very small, barely an ell high ; they were all wizen-faced and grey, but very nimble in their movements ; just as the little Lapp had found them, whose adventures are related in a fairy tale with which the two children were familiar. The gnomes were not at all afraid to dwell in darkness, and instead of torches they used tiny frozen glow-worms, and little bits of phosphorescent wood, which glimmered in the murky cavern. When they wanted a grand display of fireworks they simply stroked the fur of a great black cat the wrong way, and it at once emitted such bright sparkles that many of the dwarfs cried out in a shrill voice, " Oh, don't, don't ! it is quite dazzling us ; nobody can stand it."

It is a peculiar fact that trolls and such folk can't bear light, for it shows them up in their true colours. They were now celebrating a great annual feast, rejoicing that the days were getting shorter and the nights longer as the year waned ; and they stoutly maintained every yule-tide (for one readily believes in the realization of one's fondest hopes) that the days would at last altogether recede before a great eternal night, and as this was their faith they were now celebrating the time about which it would happen, with strange revels, dancing and capering in their yule-cave, for they were in the darkness of heathenism, and lived in utter ignorance of the beautiful Christmas-tree and its significance. It was plain the dwarfs were not susceptible to the intense cold, for they treated each other to ices and lollipops of icicles, and crystalised cakes of glittering snow, and took the precaution of further cooling these dainties by their breaths, that they might be more congenial to their cold insides. There were also other savoury dishes of spiders' legs, wormwood and snake-root, and they had a yule-tree hung with icicles, and one of the dwarfs acted as yule-

goat. Their giant-king, the grim mountain-ogre, was not with them this year, for since the time he had burst with rage near the manse of the pious vicar of Enarey, he had not been seen, and some of them thought he had left for Spitzbergen, to become king of a heathen snowy region, to be as far off as possible from the neighbourhood of all Christians. His throne had therefore been usurped by the king of darkness and sin called Mundus; and by his side in the large cavern sat his Queen Caro, and both were adorned with tufts of beard. They were making each other presents just like other folks. King Mundus gave to Queen Caro a pair of stilts which were so high that when she mounted them her position became the most elevated of any woman or troll in the world, and Queen Caro presented King Mundus with a huge and mighty extinguisher, with which he could just put out all impertinent lights. Many a mundane ruler would be delighted to get such a Christmas-box. King Mundus rose from the seat of his throne and made to the throng of gnomes and dwarfs a most magniloquent speech, assuring them that there would soon be no more light, and that a

pall of eternal darkness would be thrown over the land, and gnomes and dwarfs would rule the world. At this the sprites yelled with fiendish glee, crying out with their squeaky voices : "Hurrah, hurrah ! long live our great King Mundus, and our charming Queen Caro ! May sin and darkness reign eternal. Hi, hi, hi, hurrah ! "

The king said : " Where is my royal scout whom I sent to the mountain peak, to see if he could descry any light still remaining in the world ? "

At this juncture the scout returned, saying : " Your power is great, dread lord ; darkness reigns supreme ! "

After a little while the king repeated : " Where is my spy ? "

The dwarf in question again returned : " Great king ! " said he, " I can descry at the furthest limit of the horizon a small speck of light, like unto the mere sheen of a twinkling star, as it gleams through a rift of a dark cloud. "

And the king replied : " Return to the mountain peak. "

After a short interval the king again asked :

“Where is my scout?” and in a moment he was at the king’s feet.

“Lord king,” he said, “the welkin is draped with heavy snow-clouds, and I can no longer spy the flickering light.”

The monarch replied : “Return once more to the peak.”

After another interval the king again asked : “Where is my scout?”

In an instant he was again before him ; but the royal questioner found that his emissary trembled with fear and was quite blind. On perceiving this the king said : “My faithful spy, why do you tremble, and how comes it that you are blind?”

The scout replied : “Dread king, the clouds have dispersed, and a star, larger and brighter than all others, has shone forth, and sheds a radiance all over the heavens. I tremble at the discovery, and the sight of it has struck me blind.”

“What does it mean?” the king exclaimed. “Is not all light extinguished, and does not eternal darkness reign supreme?”

The whole assembly of gnomes and dwarfs were frightened into silence, and could make no reply.

At last a husky voice in the throng said : " Dread king, here have come two children of men, waiting in fear at the entrance ; let us question them, perhaps they know more than we do."

" Bring them here !" commanded the king, and immediately Fred and Lotty were dragged forth to the foot of the throne, and their courage quite forsook them. The queen saw their great fright, and said to one of her small weird attendants, " Treat the poor children to some dragon's blood and beetle-scales, perhaps that may loose their tongues."

" Here, eat and drink heartily," said the old dwarf hag ; but the children could not, for they had no appetite.

The king now said to them : " You are entirely in my power ; I can transform you into crows or spiders at my will ; but if you can solve a riddle which I will put to you, then I will have you conveyed to your home again, without your incurring any danger. Will you agree to that ? "

" Yes, sir," answered the children quickly.

" Well, then," said the king, " what does it

mean, that a great light is shining, the darkest night of the year, when all lights have been put out, and sin and darkness reign supreme in the world ? for in the east is seen a star arising that sheds a brighter radiance than all others, and threatens to dispel the shadows of my kingdom. Tell me, children, if you can, what means that star ? ”

Lotty answered : “ It is the Star of Bethlehem, which in the Christmas night rises over the land of Judæa, and throws its light over all the world.”

“ Why does it shine so brightly ? ” the king asked.

“ Because,” Fred replied, “ on this night was born our Saviour, the Light of the World. From this time the light of faith increases ; also the days begin now to grow longer ! ”

The king trembled violently on his throne, and asked again : “ What is the name of that King and Lord who was born on this night, to save the world from the powers of darkness and sin ? ”

Instantly both of the children answered : “ Christ Jesus, the Son of God ! ”

Scarcely had they uttered these words, when the whole mountain began to tremble and shake to its hidden depths, and—with a tremendous crash fell in ; and a hurricane swept through the opened cave and overturned the king's throne ; while the effulgent radiance of the star lit up the deepest clefts and chasms ; and all the gnomes and dwarfs dissolved into smoke and vapour, and nothing remained but their icicle yule-tree, which began to melt into glittering tears, while high up in the air the voices of angels were heard singing to the music of cymbals and harps. The children covered their faces with their hands and dared not look up ; and then a deep sleep fell upon them, as when the body is quite exhausted, and they were no longer conscious of what occurred around them.

When they awoke they found themselves safely in their cosy little beds, and a cheery fire was burning brightly, and Kajsa, their old nurse, who always used to awake them, stood by their bedside and said : “ You must make haste and get up, to be in time for church ! ”

Fred and Lotty started upright, each in their bed, and looked at old Kajsa to see if she were

only a dwarf with a tuft of beard, and who would offer them dragon's blood and beetle-scales for breakfast; but they saw instead that on the table was already placed hot coffee, as well as buns, which was a special treat Christmas-morn had brought; and they heard the sledge-bells tinkle ready for departure, and they saw great numbers of people already on their way to church. Lighted candles were placed in all windows to light up the road in the dark early morning, but brightest of all shone the little church, brilliantly illumined for the yule-wake. Fred and Lotty looked at each other, but dared not tell old Kajsa that they had seen the goblins celebrating their yule revels in the mountain. Perhaps she would not believe them, but only have laughed at them, and declared that they had slept the whole night in their own little beds. But she did not know, and you don't know, and I don't know, and nobody really knows whether this was the case or not. But one thing I do know, and that is that discontented children sooner or later meet with just what they deserve, and then they are treated to icicles, wormwood, snakeroot, and the like, instead of the humble fare which in their own homes they had

despised ; and sooner than they think, they will find themselves enthralled by the prince of darkness and sin.

Happy they if then they behold the star of faith dispelling the shadows of the surrounding night, and if they can call upon a name at the mention of which all evil things vanish disarmed.

Fred and Lotty could not easily forget the goblin's yule ; they had not only been entirely deprived of all Christmas-boxes, but they felt so ashamed of themselves, so conscience-stricken, that they did not venture to lift up their eyes during the beautiful service at the church on Christmas morn. The Star of Bethlehem had lit up all the lights in the sacred fane, which now was dazzlingly illumined within, like a good conscience, and whose radiance was reflected in the beaming eyes of all good little children present. Fred and Lotty noticed it quite plainly, but dared not look up. Then they determined to amend, and also become good and loving children. Have they kept their resolve, think you ? Really I don't know, but I would fain hope so. When you see them you may ask them.

GIFTS FROM THE DEEP.



DURING the fishing season (from early spring until late in the autumn) there lived on a small red rocky islet, just off the coast, in the Baltic, an old fisherman, named Salmon, with his wife. What more appropriate name could they have? Their hut was very small, and had a wooden latch instead of a lock, a fireplace roughly put together from bits of rock and big stones, and on the roof stood a flag-pole, carrying a whirling vane. When winter approached they removed to a more comfortable place on the mainland, but near the shore, for close to the water they must live, they were so habituated to it.

The islet was called Ahtola, and was no bigger than the market-place in the neighbouring town.

In a cleft stood a small mountain-ash and four willow bushes. Heaven only knows how they had chanced to grow there ; perhaps the seeds had come with the autumn currents. Besides these there also grew a few tufts of rich grass, a few sedges and a few bulrushes, two solitary plants of some herb with yellow seed-pods, and some high plants of the pink-blossomed epilobium, and a pretty little flower called the *triastalis Europea* but the most highly prized of all on the isle were the tufts of grass-leek which the old dame had herself reared in a sheltered nook, protected from the north wind by a wall, and which lay open to the sun. It was not much, to be sure, but it sufficed for a kitchen garden for the old housewife.

Good things in this world frequently come together by threes, and the old couple therefore caught salmon during the spring, small herring during the summer, and cod in the autumn. When it was fine weather and the wind was favourable they sailed every Saturday to the little town on the mainland, and sold their fresh-caught fish, and on the Sunday they went to the church ; but it often happened that they had to

remain several weeks at a time by themselves on the rock Ahtola, and then they saw nobody but their old brown and yellow mongrel, who rejoiced in the proud name of "Prince," and nothing but the tufts of grass and sedge, bushes and flowers, the sea-gulls and the fishes, the stormy clouds, and the blue waves with their white foaming crests. The cliff was situated at the furthest bounds of the cluster of sea-girt islands, and there were not any green spots, or human habitations for many a mile around, only here and there rocks of the same red granite as Ahtola, which reared their hard heads out of the water, which night and day threw its spray over them.

Salmon and his wife were a thrifty old couple, happy and contented in their lonely and lowly life, with no company to share their poverty but Prince, the frisky dog, and they considered themselves blessed with great wealth when they managed to dry and salt a sufficient store of fish to keep them during the winter, leaving a small surplus to buy tobacco for the old man, and a few pounds of coffee for the old woman, which she eked out with chicory and roasted corn. Besides this they had both bread and

butter, and fish, and a barrel of small-beer, and a keg of sour milk. What more could they wish for ?

Everything had gone well, had it not been that the old woman had a secret passion, which tormented her day and night ; she racked her brains to discover a way to save enough money to buy a cow !

“ What would you do with a cow ? ” asked her husband one day. “ She can’t swim so far as here, and the boat is too small to hold her, so we should not be able to get her to the rock ; and even supposing we could, we have nothing to keep her with ! ”

“ Here are four bushes and sixteen tufts of grass ! ” observed the old woman.

“ Truly now,” laughed the old man, “ we have three tufts of leek-grass as well, she might browse on that. What say you ? ”

“ All cows like kippered herring,” she replied stoutly, “ and Prince delights also in a snack of fish.”

“ What would things come to ? ” answered the old man ; “ that would be too expensive a cow to keep. It is all very well with Prince, who fights

with the sea-gulls for his portion of the refuse, when we cure the herrings! Never mind the cow, mother, let well alone!"

But the old woman sighed. She confessed to herself that her old man was in the right, but the cow she could not dismiss from her thoughts. The stored sour milk she no longer relished in her coffee, and she set her heart upon sweet cream for coffee, and sour milk to be kept only three days when it would taste like custard; and was she to be deprived of the greatest luxury she knew of?

One day when the old couple were busy with the salting of fish on the strand, Prince was heard to bark, and immediately after a sprucely painted craft was seen rounding the point, with three young gentlemen in white caps, who were making for the rock. They were young students out for a holiday, and as soon as the boat touched the strand they landed in quest of something to regale themselves with.

"Let's have a sour-milk custard, old woman!" one of them called out.

"I only wish I possessed one," she sighed.

"Give us a gallon of new milk then instead!"

the student urged. "But no skim-milk, mother!"

"I only wish I had some," she sighed still heavier.

"What! have you not a cow?"

She made no answer; it was her sore point; it touched her too deeply. At last she took heart and said, "Alack-a-day! we have no cow, but if you would like some new dried herrings, you can soon have them smoking hot!"

"Very well, that will do," they answered, and seating themselves on the craggy shore, lighted their pipes and cigars, while fifty silvery herrings were strung over the stove for their delectation.

"What do you call this rock, old gaffer?" queried one of the students.

"Ahtola!" answered the old man.

"Then you have nothing to complain of, when you live on the domain of the god of the mighty deep?"

Old Salmon could make nothing of this; he had never read Kalevala, and knew nothing of the mythology of his fore-fathers, but one of the students explained the mystery. "Ahti," he said, "is a great king who dwells in the strong-

hold, Ahtola, which rises a grand rock from the depths of the sea ; there lie hidden stores of countless treasures. Him obey all fishes and inhabitants of the deep ; he possesses most splendid cows and famous horses, which graze on the weed that grows abundantly at the bottom. Anyone who keeps in with Ahti will soon become a rich man. The only thing to be avoided is never to annoy him in the slightest degree, for he is both fickle and irritable, and very ferocious when angered. He might even take it ill if only a little stone were thrown into the water, and then he demands back his gifts, and he will create an awful ado, and in a passion raise a storm to get his due, and engulf vessels in his ravenous deep. In Ahti's court serve the most wonderfully beauteous maidens, who carry the train of his queen, Welamo by name, and they comb her long flowing hair, and often listen among the sedges to the music of——”

“ Ah, indeed ! ” interrupted old Salmon ; “ did any of you gentlemen ever see any of this ? ”

“ Not exactly, but it all comes to the same,” answered the student, “ for it is printed, and you know all that is printed must be true ! ”

"To be sure!" answered the old man, rather sarcastically. "Then we ought to have had fine weather yesterday, for it says in the Royal Swedish Almanack that it would be a fine day, and yet it blew a storm and rained as if the heavens had opened their sluices!"

"Oh, that comes because the almanack has a royal patent to tell fibs, and when privileged lies are printed, of course they become truths!"

The old fisherman shook his head incredulously. The fish was now ready, and the students made a hearty meal, and treated Prince to some cold meat, which they had brought with them. The dog seated himself as a dutiful attendant, and spun his little paws in eager expectation. When the food had been demolished the students paid Salmon for the fish, and allowed him to fill his pipe from their tobacco-pouches, which was of a favourite brand, and the old man crammed his clay pipe so greedily that it broke. After this the young gentlemen thanked him for his hospitality, and departed in their fast-sailing craft, deeply regretted by Prince, who was still seated in begging posture, spinning with his paws, by way of farewell, and with wistful

eyes following the white sail until it disappeared in the distance.

The old woman had been very spare of words, but had thought all the more. She had eager ears, and treasured in her memory all she had heard regarding Ahti. "What would I not give," she thought to herself, "to be able to get a cow from the deep. What a fine thing to milk such a cow night and morning, and have no anxiety about her food, but only to keep a shelf above the window, where to keep bowls of milk and custards. Eh, man! but I suppose such good fortune will never be mine in this life!"

"What are you thinking of, old woman?" asked her husband.

"Nothing particular," she answered, but she was secretly thinking of some old foolish formula for witchcraft, that in her childhood she had learnt from a lame old man, of whom it was reputed that he could at will procure good luck when fishing.

"I have a good mind to try!" she thought.

It was Saturday, but old Salmon would never lay out his nets on Saturday evenings, for he knew well it was his bounden duty to keep the Sabbath

and not take them in of a Sunday morning. During the evening the old woman said : "To-night we might, as it is fine, lay out the nets !"

"No," answered he, "for it never brings any blessing to go fishing on Sundays."

"Last night was very stormy, we scarcely got anything," said the old woman. "To-night the sea is calm and clear as a mirror, and with the wind which has blown the herring-shoals are sure to make for the coast."

"But there is a storm a-brewing in nor'-nor'-west," answered the old man, "and Prince has been eating grass to-night."

"I hope he hasn't touched my leeks!" exclaimed the old dame with an anxious face.

"No fear; he hasn't a taste for that sort of thing," said Salmon. "But, sure as fate, the wind will blow big guns to-morrow at sun-rise."

"Let's only set one single net to leeward of the reef; we shall soon get enough to fill the barrel, and, really now, what is already packed might easily become damaged for lack of weight and pressure, and it ought to be nailed down too."

Somehow, the old man allowed himself to be

persuaded, and they went out in their boat and placed their nets. When they were fairly out at sea, the old woman began muttering the formula for lucky fishing, altering the words to suit the heartfelt desire :

“ Ahti with the flowing beard,
Ahti of the deep blue sea,
Ahti lord of flock and herd,
Dwelling in the ocean free :

“ Boundless treasures do you hold,
Priceless pearl and glowing gem,
Coronets and chests of gold,
All gathered in your ocean realm.

“ Adown the meadows of the sea
Graze your cows and oxen fine ;
All fishes come and pay you fee—
All that 's in the sea is thine.”

“ What's that you are muttering ? ” queried the old man.

“ It is only an old ditty that came into my mind,” she said, and raising her voice, continued :

“ King of seas so deep and vast,
Not your golden stores I crave,
Not your pearls and gems I ask,
Nor silver from your ocean cave !

“ Two are even when they ’re told—
A cow, oh Ahti, give to me,
And from the sun I ’ll get thee gold,
And silver fom the moon for thee! ”



“ That ’s a very stupid song,” said old Salmon ;
“ one shouldn’t ask for anything but fish from
the sea, and it is quite out of place to sing such
things on a Sabbath eve.”

The old woman pretended not to hear what
he was saying, and kept on chanting in the same
monotonous tone the whole time they remained
out. At last the old man got tired of listen-
ing to her where he sat, rowing the heavy old
boat, and began to think of his broken clay pipe

and the strong tobacco given to him by the student, so he turned the boat's head, and in due time reached their rocky home, when they soon retired to rest.

Neither of the old couple got a wink of sleep. He lay thinking of how they had broken the Sabbath, and she of the reputed cove of the deep. About midnight the old man suddenly sat upright in bed, and said to his wife: "Do you hear anything?"

"What?" she answered.

"I think I hear the vane on the roof whizzing round," he said. "We shall have a storm."

"Only your fancy," she replied.

Old Salmon lay down to rest again, but soon sprang up afresh, saying: "I am sure the vane is whirling round."

"You go to sleep, and don't bother," she remonstrated; but the old man tried in vain to sleep.

At the third time when he listened he jumped out of bed. "The vane is screaming aloud as if in agony! the wind is high, and we must go out and try to save the nets."

Both dressed themselves hurriedly, but although it was summer time the night was dark as in October, and the vane shrieked and the wind howled around the cot. When they came out on to the doorstep they found the big sea foaming white as a snow-covered field on a winter night, and the spray dashed high up over their lowly roof. Old Salmon could not recollect ever having experienced such a night during his whole life. To put the boat out to sea to save the nets was out of the question. The old couple stood amazed on the threshold, and clung to the doorway, while the salt spray dashed in their faces.

"Didn't I tell you there is never any blessing fishing on a Sabbath day," said the old man sullenly, and the old dame stood trembling, and so abashed, that she even quite forgot to think of Ahti's cows.

When they saw that nothing could be done they retired into their hut again. Their eyes were heavy with sleep after the broil, and soon they dozed off, and slept as soundly as if no angry sea had roared in rage around their lonely sea-girt home. When Salmon and his wife again

awaked the sun was already high in the heavens, and the storm had ceased ; only a heavy swell rolled against the red cliff that glittered in the sunlight—a lingering recollection of the uproar.

“ Dear me ! what do I see ? ” exclaimed the old woman as she looked out of the door.

“ I almost think it is a seal,” said the fisherman.

“ No ; as true as I live, it is a cow ! ” screamed the old housewife with delight.

And really it was a cow : a splendid red cow of the best breed, fat and plump, as if she had all her days been fed on spinach. She walked about the rock quite unconcernedly, and deigned not even to touch the spare tufts of grass, as though she despised such fare.

The old man could scarcely believe his eyes, but surely it was a cow ; she was shaped like one, and soon proved herself to be one when the old woman began to milk her, and filled all the vessels she had, even the water-butt, with fresh creamy morning milk. The old fisherman cudgelled his brains in vain to know how she had come there, and then he went off in quest of the lost nets. Ere he had searched long, he found

that they had been thrown on shore by the sea, and were so full of fish that not a single mesh could be seen for the glittering herrings. •

“It is all very well to possess a cow,” said the old man, while they were curing the fish, “but what are we to feed her on?”

“Something is sure to help us through,” said the old woman.

But the cow helped herself. She waded into the water and grazed on the seaweeds and sedge which grew in large patches close in along the shore, and by which she kept herself in fine trim. It was, indeed, a nice cow. Prince only did not like her, and he barked furiously at her, for she was a rival. From that day there was abundance of milk both of sour and sweet; all the vessels were kept full in the cot on Ahti's rock, and all the nets were heavy with fish. The old couple grew fat from such good living, and began hoarding money, for the old housewife churned many firkins of butter, and the master engaged two young men to help him in his fishing, which was now carried on very successfully and on a large scale. The great sea became to him a mere fish-pond, from which he brought

large quantities at his pleasure. The cow continued to tend herself; and in the autumn, when the old couple returned to their home on the coast, the cow went into the sea; and when they returned in the spring, there stood the cow waiting for them.

"We should be the better for a new house," said the old woman the next summer. "Our hut is far too small to live in now we have two servant-men."

"Yes," answered her husband; and soon he had a fine new house built, with a proper lock too, and had also a shed erected for the curing of fish, and engaged two more men to help in the fishing, which was now so successful that he sent many barrels of cured fish to Sweden and Russia.

"Really this drudgery is too much for me, cooking and washing for all these men," said the old dame. "It would be more easy if I had a servant-girl to help me."

"Well, get one," said the master, and accordingly they hired one.

Then the old woman said: "We haven't sufficient milk for so many of us. Since I have

a servant-girl, she might as easily tend three cows as one."

"You had better sing to the wizard of the sea again, and try once more," said the fisherman rather sarcastically.

This aggravated her a little, but, nevertheless, she took the boat and rowed out again upon the deep at night, between Saturday and Sunday, and sang as before, only altering the words to suit her desires :

" Two are even when they 're told—
Two cows, O Ahti, give to me !
And from the sun I 'll get thee gold,
And silver from the moon for thee ! "

Next morning two more cows were standing on the rocky islet, and they all fed on seaweed and took care of themselves.

"Well, are you satisfied now?" said old Salmon to his wife.

"I might easily be that," she answered, "if only I had two more servant-girls to help me in the household work, and some better clothes to put on. Haven't you heard the people call me Mistress?"

"Very well," said the old man, and she had

two more servants hired and got fine clothes for herself.

“ Everything would be all right now if we only had a nicer house to live in during the summer. You ought to build a house two stories high, and bring some mould here that we might have a garden, in which you ought also to build a summer-house for me to sit in while looking out to sea, and then we ought to have a fiddler to play of a night, and we ought then to have a steamer of our own to go to church in when the wind is ahead.”

“ Is that all ? ” asked her husband ; and he caused everything to be done exactly as she wanted. The rock of Ahtola was now finely set out, and the old woman herself became so conceited that all the little fishes around the islet gaped for very wonder. Prince was fed with veal cutlets and fine white cakes, and at last became as podgy as a butter-firkin.

“ Are you content now ? ” asked the old man.

“ Of course I would be,” answered the old housewife, “ if only I had thirty cows. It requires an awful lot of milk for such a large housekeeping.”

"Ask the old sea-wizard again," answered he.

The old woman took a trip in her brand new steamboat, and again sang to King Ahti. The next morning thirty fine cows were ranged on the rock Ahtola, and they all fed themselves as the others did.

"You know, old man, we are far too cramped for room on this wretched little isle. Where am I to put all the thirty cows?"

"I know no other remedy," said the old man, "than that you pump the sea dry."

"How you talk, to be sure! nobody could pump the sea dry."

"Try with your new steamboat; there is a pump on board."

She knew very well that he was only jesting, but could not dismiss these wishes from her heart.

"Certainly I can't pump the sea dry, but I may fill it a bit with stones, by having a big mound laid out from the shore, and thus double the size of our island."

The old woman had the steamboat loaded with stones and gravel, and went out a little way.

The fiddler accompanied her, and played so beautifully on his violin, that Ahti and Welamo, and the sirens of the deep, rose to the surface to listen to the music.

“What is that glittering so beautifully on the waves?” asked the old mistress.

“It is the foaming billows playing with the sunbeams,” answered the fiddler.

“Throw the stones overboard,” commanded the old woman.

The people on board began throwing out the stones, splash, splash, right and left, among the golden spray. One stone hit the nose of Welamo’s principal nymph in waiting, and another grazed the cheek of the Queen herself, while a third fell near King Ahti’s head and tore off the long beard of the mighty king. There was an awful broil and ado in the deep, and the billows seethed and foamed as if boiling with wrath.

“Whence came that sudden squall?” queried the old woman; but there was no time for answer, for the sea yawned like the gape of a giant sea-monster, and engulfed the steamboat at a mouthful. The old woman sank like a stone to the bottom, but struggled with arms and legs

until she again rose to the surface, when she clutched the fiddler's violin and managed to keep afloat on that. At this moment she saw Ahti's terrible head close by her side, and the one side of his great beard was torn away.

"Why have you thrown stones at me?" howled the wrathful monarch.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the old woman; "it was all in a mistake. Put some bear's grease on, and it will soon grow again."

"Old hag! haven't I bestowed upon you all you have asked for?"

"Yes, that you have, most gracious King. Most of all I thank you for the cows; they milked like camels!"

"But where is your gold from the sun, and silver from the moon, which you promised me?"

"Gracious King, it has been scattered profusely on the sea, night and day, when no clouds have been in the way," she answered artfully with a leer.

"I will teach you better!" called out the angry king, and gave the violin such a smash that it darted like a signal rocket on to the cliff, bumping the old woman ashore very abruptly.

Prince stood there gnawing as ravenously as ever at the bone of a crow. Old Salmon himself was seated on the threshold of their poor lone hut, dressed in his threadbare grey jacket, threading a net.

"Dear me, where have you been, Mother? You are darting along in such a fashion, and quite wet too!" he said.

The old woman looked dumbfounded around, saying, "Why, where is our two-storied house?"

"What house?" he answered.

"Our great house with the garden, and the servant men and women, and my beautiful thirty cows, and the steamboat, and everything else?"

"What twaddle is that you are talking?" said the old man. "The students turned your head, so that you sang crazy ditties last night when we were out at sea, and you couldn't get a wink the whole night till it was almost time to get up. There was a great storm last night, and I hadn't the heart to wake you when you at last fell asleep, so I went out alone to gather in the nets."

"But I have seen Ahti," she stoutly maintained.

“You have been in your bed the whole time, old woman, and dreamt a heap of rubbish, and then, in your sleep, you went down to the shore.”

“But there is the violin !”

“A fine fiddle that ! an old timber afloat. Another time, old woman, we will take care not to break the Sabbath ; it never brings any blessings, to fish on a Sunday morn.”



A SUNBEAM IN NOVEMBER.



UCH work was before them, the poor little ants, so they had to be very diligent, for winter was fast approaching, and they had to prepare their rooms in the hills against

the inclement season. The little things had one more peep into their larders to see that they had enough provision for their impending imprisonment of several months duration; and they were obliged to fortify the entrances to the city against assaulting foes. They also had to sweep away the dry fir-prickles from their highways and by-ways; and lastly, some of them had to climb the nearest tree to keep a look-out at what was going on in the world, and to peer up into the sky to see that winter did not come

down upon them unawares. And besides all this they still had a toilsome and dolorous work to perform, that of embedding the dying season in its autumnal grave, at which all the myriad insects of nature were assisting.

A hoar-frost had already scattered millions of pearls on the ground, but nobody cared to gather them. All withered fronds and all despoiled trees wore an aspect of grief, but the pine and fir trees, who always were attired in dark-green fur-coats, required only to brush the gossamers from their dress to appear quite spruce again. The winds, the moaning daughters of the air, were busy in the clouds gathering soft woolly snows wherewith to weave the winter shroud. The poor little billows, who felt very chilly, lulled themselves to sleep with mournful ditties, and then slept peacefully under the icy cover, and the few winged inhabitants of the wood who still remained after the great flitting, were rehearsing a pretty little choral requiem to the accompaniment of the doleful sighing of the firs at eventide.

Everything was so dark, dismal, and depressed in spirit, when a sunbeam alighted upon

the scene—a pure golden sunbeam, direct from heaven, that had penetrated the dark clouds and shone upon the pearls of the hoar-frost, the withered fronds, and the naked trees, and the sombre firs, and glided away among the diligent ants, and the millions of crawling insects, and which, in an instant, changed the aspect of the whole scene.

“Oh, dear me, what was that?” said the screech-owl, who sat perched on a big pole and was practising the bass part of the well-known air, “List to the howl of the winter storms.” His voice was very hoarse, but that was thought quite in harmony with the ditty now that the winged songsters were all away. “How is this? I am faltering, and singing out of tune, and I can’t read the music when the sun stares at me straight in the face.”

“This won’t do,” muttered the ants, who but just now had arranged the hoar-frost in regular strings of pearls, to look like frills of mourning, but which now began to melt away; “it is really too indecorous, and the frozen tears will turn into ditch-water. Is there no sunshade to be had from north to south?”

The cricket had, through the whole summer, been grinding an organ, and never cared a straw for work. He now lay emaciated and half starved to death under a withered aspen leaf, but at the kindly touch of the sunbeam he quickened into life again, and, thinking it was still summer, began turning his barrel-organ anew, so that the aspen leaf trembled, but the exertion was too much for his slender limbs, and he dropped all to pieces, and there was an end to that ill-favoured organ-grinder.

The sunbeam saw all this when he broke through the dark threatening clouds in the autumn sky. But he soared away on radiant wings, through the crisp frosty air, seeking where he might gladden and bring joy and comfort upon earth.

The sunbeam descended upon a frozen pool, and made the autumnal ice shine with a steely lustre. "Is there anybody here who is sad at heart?" he asked. "No, indeed!" answered the school-boys, who, on bright skates, were inscribing their initials with grace and skill on the brilliant surface, laughing and vociferating, while the little girls were standing on the side,

trying with one foot at a time to see if the ice would be strong enough to bear them also. It was delightful fun.

The sunbeam proceeded, and greeted a slender birch who stood despoiled of his foliage. "Sad at heart?" asked the heaven-born messenger. "No," answered the tree; "why should I grieve? I know full well that I shall be clad in soft green foliage more beautiful than ever as soon as spring-time comes."

And the sunbeam darted further, and arrived at a humble cot, where the poor and numerous family were just sharing their last meal with those still poorer than themselves. "Anyone here sad at heart?" "No," answered the poor people; "why should we complain? We know very well that God in His mercy provides for all; we cast our burthens upon Him, and He will sustain us."

The sunbeam went far out to sea, and alighted upon a vessel labouring hard against the driving storm. "Anybody here sad at heart?" "No," answered a hardy old seaman; "why should we fear? We know very well that God has provided the compass and will bring the ship into

port, and nerves us to brave all dangers. The Lord is our anchor."

The sunbeam then peeped in between the folds of a drawn window-blind, into a room where lay a sick man. "Sad at heart?" "No," answered the sufferer; "why should I grieve? God is my health, and knows best what is good for me. I can even rejoice in my affliction, for I know it is by the hand of God, and His means are just and good."

Once again the sunbeam took wing, and descended into a cemetery. A mother was seated there weeping over her dead infant. "Sorely grieved at heart?" "No," answered the mother, her eyes filled with tears; "why should I mourn, when I know that I shall soon meet my child again with God? Let me tell you, bright little Sunbeam, that my tears are tears of joy and gratitude that God has called my little angel child so soon back to His kingdom, before its white wings had become soiled by the sins of the world."

And the sunbeam wondered that he had not met with grief upon earth. He had not been everywhere, the genial and solitary sunbeam!

After a little while he stole into a room through a window-pane, where stood a little girl beside a flower-pot. "Any sadness here?" "Yes," answered the maiden; "I am so sorry. I am grieving at the loss of my orange-shoot. I planted it to gather blossoms from for my future bridal-wreath, but it is fast withering in these dull November days."

"If it is nothing else," said the complaisant sunbeam, "I can easily remedy that." And he shone forth so warmly that the fading plant quickly revived, and death vanished, and grief was chased from the maiden's brow.

And then the sunbeam found its way into a prison. "Does grief dwell here?" "Yes," truly said the captive malefactor, who lay fast bound in chains awaiting his execution. "Who so miserable as I, a criminal and a prisoner, forsaken by God and man, and with no hope of pardon." "Behold!" said the sunbeam, and he shone bright upon the page of the Bible which lay open at the place where the Saviour pronounces pardon to the repentant robber on the cross. And black despair fled, and hope and faith came and took their dwelling in the man's heart.

Once more the sunbeam flitted about, and lit upon old John Merryman, who stood by a swirling stream wringing his hands in deepest despair. "Are you sad at heart?" "Yes," answered John. "But why do you grieve?" "I repent my lost childhood, when I was disobedient to my parents, who died long ago; I grieve at my squandered youth, which I wasted in sloth and excesses, and now I am grown old; I grieve at my lost life, which has never been of any use, or imparted joy to anybody, for I never thought of anything else but the gratification of my own pleasure. I have, therefore, come to throw myself into the stream to seek oblivion."

"Stay a little," said the sunbeam; "follow me, and I will show you where you may still do some good in the world." And the sunbeam flitted before him, over tufts and withered grass, and John Merryman followed in the bright track until they arrived at the pond whither some truant children had stolen without leave during school-time.


"Seat yourself here," said the sunbeam, "and tell the children what the consequences in after-life will be when they now think of nothing but pleasure." The old man obeyed, and boys and

girls gathered around him to listen to his mournful and admonishing recital, while the sunbeam looked them straight in the eyes, like a ray emitted from the eternal light. Old John Merryman now felt happy that he could for once do some good. And the thoughtless children grew serious and stood quite abashed ; but there was no harm in that, for it was a sadness out of which grew joy and true happiness.

The sunbeam had travelled about for a long time that day, was now recalled, and in the twinkling of an eye darted through the ninety-five million miles away to his glorious home.

Autumn drew his cloudy mantle across the sun, but the bright sunbeam was twinkling behind, ready to dart forth at the earliest opportunity through any rent that might occur in the curtains. He had to wait a long dreary time, but at last an aperture was seen and he escaped, but it was winter then, and he shone away upon the cold snow. But he thought of his joyous flight in November, when to many he had borne gladness, and those were recollections well worth treasuring.

AMONG THE RASPBERRIES.

“HAT a nasty thing !” cried Theresa.

“ Oh, fie ! ” called out Aina.

“ What ’s the matter ? ” asked the eldest sister.

“ A grub ! ” screamed Theresa, shuddering.

“ In a raspberry ! ” shrieked Aina.

“ Kill it ! ” bawled Lorenzo.

“ What an ado about a poor little worm ! ” said the eldest sister, a little annoyed.

“ When we were sorting the raspberries——”

“ He crept out of the biggest one,” interrupted Aina.

“ And if anybody had eaten that raspberry ! ” exclaimed Theresa.

“ He would have eaten the grub as well ! ” rejoined Aina.

“ Well, what then ? ” asked Lorenzo.



AMONG THE RASPBERRIES.

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"What! eat a grub?" shouted Theresa, horrified.

"Crush him with your teeth?" cried Aina.

"Awful!" mocked Lorenzo.

"Now it is crawling on the table!" screamed Theresa anew.

"Blow it away," proposed the eldest sister quietly.

"Put your foot on it!" urged Lorenzo, contemptuously.

But Theresa took a raspberry-leaf, and gently swept the grub on to it, and carried it away into the yard. And Aina saw a sparrow sitting on the railings, peering wistfully at the tempting prey. So she took the leaf with the little grub on it and carried it into the wood, and hid it under a clump of raspberry canes, where the cunning little sparrow couldn't find it.

What more may there be to tell about a simple raspberry grub? Who cares a straw about such an insignificant little thing? I only wish I might live in such a pretty place, a cool, odorous crimson house like that, hidden in the tranquil wood amongst flowers and foliage.

It was now dinner-time, and everybody had

raspberries and milk for dinner. "What a lot of sugar you do waste on your raspberries," said the eldest sister disapprovingly, for Lorenzo's plate resembled a small snowdrift in winter-time, with the berries peeping forth—blushing for shame at his gluttony.

Shortly after dinner the eldest sister said, "Now we have eaten all the raspberries, and have nothing to make preserves of for winter. I wish I had two baskets full of fresh-picked raspberries; we would sort them to-night, and preserve them to-morrow in the big stone pot, and then you would all have a treat of tarts with raspberry jam on them."

"Very well; we will go into the wood and gather some," said Theresa.

"Yes, that we will," added Aina; "you take the yellow basket, and I'll take the green one."

"Don't lose your way, and mind you come home in time for supper," admonished the eldest sister.

"Give my respects to the raspberry grub!" taunted Lorenzo; "and tell him that next time I see him I'll take compassion on the poor wretch and swallow him."

Away went Aina and Theresa to the wood which was so cool and fresh and delightful in the full-blown pride of summer. True, it was rather tiresome at times to climb over fallen trees, and get entangled in the thickets, and tear and scratch oneself among the brambles and junipers, and have to fight against unconquerable hosts of gnats and midges, but it didn't much matter. The brave little girls penetrated into the woods, having first pinned up their dresses for convenience sake.

There were plenty of blue-berries, also various other kinds, but great scarcity of raspberries. They continued their way, however, and at last they came to—well, who would have thought it?—a large glade full of raspberry canes! There were evident signs of a great fire having raged here a long time ago, and now there grew a complete spinney of raspberry canes as far as eye could see in every direction. The branches were heavy with big ripe crimson raspberries! Such an inconceivable quantity of the glorious juicy dainties, had never before been discovered by two young berry-gathering girls. Theresa plucked eagerly, and so did Aina, and then they

both sat down and had a feast; then up, and again they merrily continued their work, and soon had their baskets quite full.

“Let us go home now,” said Aina.

“No; let us gather a few more first,” objected Theresa.

They placed their baskets on the ground, and now began gathering in their aprons, which in a short time also became full.

But now we really must go home,” said Theresa.

“Yes, yes; let us go,” assented Aina.

And each took her basket in one hand and gathered up the apron with the other, and thus they commenced their way home.

But this was easier said than done. They had never before been so far into the vast forest, where neither roads nor paths existed, and the two girls soon saw that they had lost their way. What most disquieted them was, they found the shadows of the trees began to fall long, and the flickering flames of the setting sun were bidding farewell to day. The birds were hieing home to their nests, and the evening dews began to fall rapidly. The sun now finally disappeared.

behind the dark pine and fir tree tops, and the darkness and chill of night in the sombre wood fell upon the lone wanderers.

The two little sisters felt dreadfully uneasy, but continued their way in one direction, hoping the forest would soon end, and that they would then discover the smoke curling from their own home. But when they had walked a long way it grew almost dark. They had now arrived at a large plain, thickly covered with brushwood, and when they looked around as well as they could in the dusk, they found they were again among the raspberry canes, from which they had filled their baskets and aprons. Very tired and disheartened, they seated themselves on a stone and began to cry.

“ I am so hungry ! ” said Theresa.

“ So am I,” said Aina ; “ how I wish we had a couple of big sandwiches ! ”

She had scarcely said this, when she felt something on her lap, and to her great surprise and delight found it was a large piece of hard-baked buttered bread with thin slices of game put on.

“ How strange ! ” said Theresa at the same

moment; "I have a large slice of bread and butter in my hand."

"So have I," rejoined Aina. "Do you dare eat yours?"

"Certainly I dare," replied Theresa; "I only wish I had a big tumbler of nice milk as well!"

She had no sooner uttered her wish than she felt a large tumbler full of milk placed in her hand. A moment afterwards Aina said: "Theresa, Theresa! I have got a glass of milk! how strange!"

Being very hungry, the two little sisters ate and drank with great gusto. When they had finished, Aina yawned and stretched out her arms, saying, "I wish I had now a cosy little bed to sleep in."

She had scarcely said this before she found by her side a fine soft bed, inviting her to rest. Theresa also found one for her. The girls thought this very strange indeed, but sleepy and fatigued as they were, they did not hesitate, but said their prayers, then crept into the little beds, and pulled up the clothes about their ears, and in a short time they were sound asleep.

The sun was already high in the heavens

when they awoke. It was a delightful morning in the sylvan glade, and the little birds hopped merrily from branch to branch. Now they were surprised indeed, beyond measure, when they found they had been sleeping all amongst the raspberry canes. They looked at each other, and then at their beds, which were spread with the whitest linen over a layer of dry leaves and soft green moss.

At last Theresa said: "Are you awake, Aina?"

"Yes, I am," she replied.

"But I am still dreaming!" maintained Theresa.

"No, you are not," Aina declared. "But I do believe some good gnome dwells among these raspberry canes. Oh, how I wish we had some nice hot cups of coffee and buns for breakfast!"

She had scarcely said this before a nice little silver tray was placed by their side, on which stood a shiny coffee pot, two pairs of cups and saucers of best Dresden china, a beautiful crystal sugar-basin, a silver cream-jug, and some smoking hot buns on a silver plate. They poured the aromatic coffee into the cups, put sugar in it,

and added thick fresh cream, and then they thoroughly enjoyed it all. Never before had they tasted such splendid coffee!

"I should so like to know who has provided us with all these nice things," said Theresa with a grateful heart.

"I have done it, dear little girls," said a voice issuing from the raspberry canes. The girls turned round somewhat timidly, and saw a genial-looking little old man, dressed in a white blouse and a red cap, approaching them limping, for he was slightly lame in his left foot. Both Theresa and Aina were so astonished that neither of them could utter a word.

"Don't be afraid, little girls," said the old man, grinning in a friendly manner, for he could not manage a proper laugh, his mouth being all awry. "Welcome into my dominion! Have you slept well? and have you enjoyed your meals?" he asked.

"Yes, that we have!" they answered both at once; "but tell us who——" They intended to ask the old man who he was, but were afraid to do so.

"I will tell you who I am. I am the king

who rules over this grand raspberry realm, where I have lived thousands of years. But the Great Spirit, who is the Lord of the forest and the sea and the whole universe, in order to teach me not to be proud of my royal power and my long life, has commanded that for one day in every hundredth year I shall be transformed into an insignificant raspberry grub, and risk my life in the shape of a helpless and powerless worm from sunrise to sundown. During this transformation my life entirely depends upon the fate of the little grub; a bird may eat me, or a child may chance to gather me with the raspberries, and crush me with its foot, and for ever annihilate my thousand-year-old existence. Yesterday happened to be the centenary of my transformation, and I was gathered in my raspberry dwelling, and nigh being trampled to death, if you, kind-hearted little girls, had not saved me. From early dawn I lay helpless in the berry, and when I was blown down from your table I hurt my ankle, and as I gasped with fright at my fall, my mouth went all awry. When night came I returned to my proper shape, and immediately began to look out for you to thank you and

reward you, and I found you both in my kingdom, and received you as well as I could without frightening you too much. I will now send a bird to show you through the forest to your own home. Good-bye, my little darlings! I thank you for your kindness; the Raspberry King will know how to show his gratitude to you."

The girls now even ventured to shake hands with the quaint little old man, and thanked him heartily, rejoicing that they had saved the little raspberry grub yesterday. As they were leaving, the old man turned round once more and grinned maliciously with his damaged mouth, and said :

"Give my compliments to Lorenzo, and tell him that next time we meet I shall take compassion on him and swallow him whole, the little wretch!"

"Oh, please don't! Mr. Raspberry Grub," the two little sisters cried, quite frightened.

"Well, then, for your sake I will forgive him," the old man replied. "I am not revengeful. Greet Lorenzo, however, and tell him he also may expect a present. And now, farewell!"

The two girls skipped off in high glee with their raspberries, following the track which the

little bird indicated in his flight. The forest soon became more open, and they were not a little surprised when they found how they wandered round and about yesterday. It may easily be imagined what joy there was on all sides when they returned home safe. They had all been waiting and looking for them, and the eldest sister had not been able to close her eyes from motherly anxiety. She feared the wolves had devoured her little darling sisters. Lorenzo met them on the doorstep with a basket, calling out, "Make haste and come! here's something which an old man has just left for you."

When the girls unpacked the basket they found two pairs of most beautiful bracelets, of dark ruby stones, cut in the shape of big ripe raspberries, addressed to Theresa and Aina. Beside these lay also a diamond breast-pin representing a raspberry grub, with a superscription: "Lorenzo, never kill the defenceless!" The lad felt somewhat ashamed, for he understood the hint, and thought that the old man had revenged himself in just such a manner as good souls do. The Raspberry King had also remembered the eldest sister, for when she went into the dining-

room to lay the cloth for dinner she found twelve large baskets full of the most splendid and delicious raspberries that could be found in the wood. Nobody could tell how they had come there, but everybody made a pretty sure guess.

And now commenced such a boiling and sugaring down for preserving, that you never saw the like, and if you choose we will go there to help them, and we shall then get our share of the treat, for I verily believe they are preserving raspberries to this day !



THE ROAD TO THE CLOUDS.



EERED at the
boy deserves to
be, who is al-
ways roasting
himself before
the fire! Well,

remain there, you chilly numbskull, afraid to stir
out into the world, and you are welcome too, to
laugh at the other lads who are fools enough to
run about and play, hardening themselves in the

pure, cold, frosty winter's day. I will tell you something which, maybe, you are not aware of: no effeminate lad will ever turn out to be a proper man. There is something worse than chilled hands: that of being in life a chicken-hearted ninny. Such a youngster had better be kept under a glass shade, or be put to bed for the rest of his life. Believe me, it takes a man to battle with life. It won't do for a boy to be brought up afraid of a breath of invigorating winter, like a delicate flower. If so, it will be all the worse for him in after-life.

It is glorious to live when the sun shines on the sparkling fields of snow! How the boys' little hand-sledges glide down the frozen hill, and how merrily the bells tinkle as swiftly they fly past, far out on the ice of the lake below! If you feel cold, starveling, well, stay at home, the best place for such as you; or stand aside and look on. The little sledges have nimble runners, and require neither horses nor whip.

Walter was one of those hardy little fellows who never seem to feel cold at all, even if he had forgotten his mittens. If the tip of his merry little nose was a bit frozen, well—then he

blew it and was as jolly as ever. If his fingers ached with cold, he rubbed them with snow against each other, and beat his arms across his chest. Afraid he never was—not he, unless he had done something wrong, and then he felt ashamed to look anybody in the face. God brands every evil-doer with disgrace, so that everybody can read it in their faces. He did so with Cain, and he does so still ; they all carry it in their eyes.

On the steep mountain slope near the lake wound a path which was called the “ Road to the Clouds,” because, looking up from below, it seemed to lead straight to the sky. No horse could ascend this high hill, but all the boys in the neighbourhood did with their tiny sledges, and a fine sight it was. “ The Road to the Clouds ” was divided half-way up by a piece of level ground, so that those who did not venture to start down from the summit, could content themselves with a run half-way down, when the speed would not be quite so terrific.

It was a fine winter’s day, and the boys were thoroughly enjoying the fun of flying down the hill on their tiny tinkling sledges. Some of

them had little girls sitting in front, and then it required all their skill and nerve to steer the fleet conveyance properly through the twistings and turnings, when sometimes it happened the young lasses would scream with fright. "Don't be afraid ; it is all right !" the boys would shout in return. And really it went off splendidly ; rapidly they sped far out on the ice. To be sure, now and then a sledge would tumble over with its merry occupants, and then some lost their caps, or got a scratch on the nose ; but they did not mind that a bit, and they would soon resume their sport, merrier than ever.

Father Christmas had brought Walter a small sledge, which was quite peerless in its way. It was shod with iron, which soon became polished by the friction. It could be steered by reins, as if drawn by an imaginary horse, if its master did not care to direct its course with his heels when he sat astride. It was christened "Pikku-Buck" because it overtook all other sledges going down hill, and then would give them a punch in the back. "Pikku-Buck" and Walter were great chums. I wish you could have seen them darting down the glassy road. They came

shooting along in a whirlwind of snow, as if direct from the clouds. In fact the little sledge was a paragon of speed and beauty, and Walter never grew tired of extolling its merits.

By the side of the "Road to the Clouds" was another high hill, but up which no path had been made, and the space between had been denominated by the youngsters "The land of Sugar," and anyone who ventured on its treacherous ground was immediately engulfed in its soft snow, just as if caught in a trap of powdered sugar (hence the name), and nothing remained on the crystallised surface but his cap to tell where the luckless wight had disappeared.

No one ever dared risk the immersion, not even the most foolhardy of the dauntless boys. But Walter, relying on his trusty "Pikku-Buck," resolved upon an excursion into the "Land of Sugar." No sooner said than done, and all the little girls and boys stared at him in amazement. Walter mounted the highest point of the rocky snow-clad hill, and "Pikku-Buck" followed in his track like a faithful dog. When they could get no higher, the young master took the reins, and, giving the word of command, steered straight

into the snowy fields of the "Land of Sugar." "Pikku-Buck" obeyed, of course, and darted at full speed—not forward, but downward on his nose. Walter, riding on "Pikku-Buck," disappeared in an instant, and nothing was seen of him but his cap, left as a landmark to tell where he had been engulfed in the soft yielding snow.

He shut his eyes when he felt himself sinking deeper and deeper, and fluttering to the ground like a crow shot on the wing, but at last he got an awful whack on his head. When he looked up, he found himself with "Pikku-Buck" in front of a splendid palace of ice, with colonnades of glittering crystal, and banquetting halls, whose very walls shone like silver. King Winter hurried out from his castle, clothed in a dress of wolf and bearskin, and he also had a long wavy beard of hoar-frost, and on his arm leaned his queen, dressed in snowy-white robes, and with a coronet of ice diamonds on her brow. "Welcome to my dominions!" said the frosty monarch. "When once here you will never return. I like plucky little rascals like you, and I appoint you master of the revels at my court,

and you and 'Pikku-Buck' shall be made much of."

"I like that very much," said Walter, "but I should like still better to get something nice and warm to eat, for I am awfully hungry."

"Very well, come with me," said the king, coldly, "and I'll first dip you in icy water, and you shall have an ice-pudding, such as you have never eaten before, made of delicious frozen dew-drops, and sugared all over with crystallized snow."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Snow-beard," answered Walter, "but the mere description of it has given me enough."

"You little vagabond!" said the king, enraged. "I'll teach you to despise my kindly offered gifts. Come here, my chilly spouse. Breathe on this Will-o'-the-wisp and transform him into a snowbird, doomed to be constantly on the wing in the boundless realm of King Winter."

The soft-featured, graceful Majesty of Snow fanned on Walter a cold icy wind, which shivered him into little atoms, and he found his spirit had become enveloped in a little snow-flake, which danced merrily away amongst milliards of other

little brothers and sisters between heaven and earth. It was a delightful feeling of unbounded freedom, but withal a sad cold fate; and the worst of all, perhaps, was that he could not help feeling anxious about "Pikku-Buck."

He looked around very earnestly, and found . . . himself lying in his own cosy bed at home, but that his head felt very heavy. Around the bed stood his parents, brothers, and sisters, and his mother said, softly, "Thank heaven, he is getting better!"

"Where am I?" asked Walter, and seated himself upright. "Have I not been riding on 'Pikku-Buck' in the 'Land of Sugar?' Did I not meet 'King Winter,' who wanted to dip me in his sea of ice, and his chilling queen who changed me into a snow-flake?" How have I been able to return home?"

"My dear boy," said his papa, "you have indeed been wandering, but you have forgotten that, like a booby, you sped down the high hill with your head foremost, so that you at last got a nasty thump against the trunk of a tree. The other boys pulled you out of the snow-drift, and in consequence of the crack you have been

dreaming about the 'Land of Sugar.' But you must keep very quiet now, and have your head bathed in cold water, then you will soon be all right again."

"But where is 'Pikku-Buck?' " asked Walter, who could scarcely realize the fact.

"'Pikku-Buck' has broken his nose in the adventure, and is waiting at the back door for you to get well again and have him mended."



IMITATING ROBINSON CRUSOE.



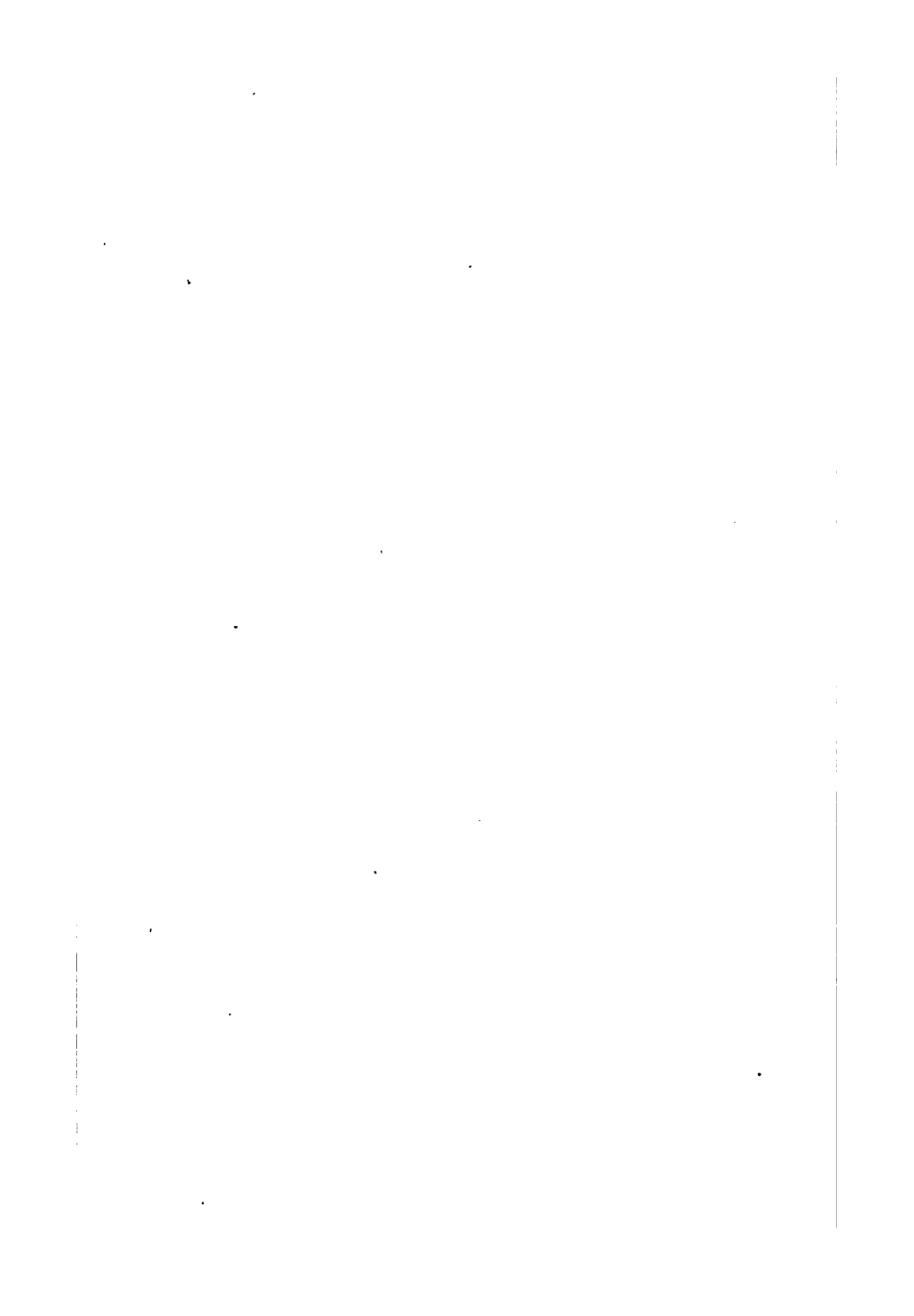
WALTER found one day an old book in the garret, and in it he read about Robinson Crusoe, who ran away from his parents, and came to an uninhabited island, where he had lived alone for many years. What a glorious adventure! Walter would fain have been there instead of Robinson Crusoe. He did not reflect how bitterly the adventurer had regretted ever having run away from his good home.

Walter read on eagerly, and the more he read the more delightful he thought it would be to imitate Robinson. The story related how he had been dressed in furs from head to foot. Luckily there lay in the garret an old coat, lined with woolly black sheep-skin. Young Walter turned this inside out and put it on.



IMITATING ROBINSON CRUSOE.

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What a fine figure he cut, to be sure ! He also found some sheets of thick blue paper which had formerly covered sugar-loaves, and in a basket were kept some feathers, plucked from game and and poultry. He tried one of the blue paper coronets, and adorned it with fine feathers, and thought it excellent. For a beard he got some flax and made a truly monstrous one, which he tied with strings to his ears. And now he stretched himself to his full height, and thought he looked very wild indeed.

This occurred one summer evening, just when his sister Lotty called up the stairs for him to come down to supper, from which injunction there was no appeal. Quick as thought he flung the fleecy coat and the feathered hat in a corner. During the rest of the evening he was very thoughtful, and all the following night he scarcely got a wink of sleep. " Oh, how happy was Robinson Crusoe ! " he thought to himself ; " how I wish I could be like him, and live in the wild woods, build my house myself, prepare my own food, and kill lots of game with my bow and arrows. How I envy you, Robinson, you brave fellow ! I shall never spend such a happy

time as you did. What if I also ran away from home?" he muttered to himself immediately afterwards. At this thought his heart began to beat quickly. He seated himself upright in bed; all were asleep. Fred, his little brother, had thrown his chubby little leg over the side of his cradle, and even the cock in the neighbouring poultry-yard, for a wonder, was quiet and asleep. The blithe summer-night, only a prolonged twilight, shone invitingly through the window; the clustering white blossoms of the mountain ash waved in the garden, and from afar in the copse were heard the mellow tunes of the thrush. His heart beat still more eagerly: at last he rose cautiously and quickly, and quietly dressed himself. No one awoke. He passed through the house. When he came to the cupboard he provided himself with a small loaf and a piece of cheese, after which he stole noiselessly up the garret stairs. He soon found both the sheep-skin and the sugar-loaf hat, also his big beard. The book about Robinson Crusoe he took with him to teach him how to manage for himself, and then he again descended in his socks, and went quietly out of the front door.

Cool and fragrant was the air, and cloudless the sky, but slightly dimmed withal, as if the summer night was a little sleepy, and the dew-drops trembled on the leaflets, like silent tears on quivering eye-lids. Walter no longer walked, but took to his heels and ran as if pursued by an evil conscience. After awhile he reached the wood, just as the sun rose as if flushed with excitement, he, too, being urged to early revels in the sylvan glades. Walter seated himself and began eating bread and cheese. He did not feel in the least sleepy; he listened to the glad-some twitter of the birds, and fancied he had never before felt such delicious odours as were wafted to him from amongst the brushwood. And now he set about building a hut. He took his clasp-knife from his pocket, and lopped off large twigs and small branches from the luxuriant spruce-firs. The little branches he placed upright to form walls, and intertwined them with twigs, with which he also made the roofing. In a short time the rustic cot was completed. Within was the stump of an old tree, which served for a seat, and he rolled in a big stone to do duty as a table; for a bed he gathered birch-

leaves and green moss. It was really delightful, and he did not care a bit that his fingers grew sticky from handling the resinous wood.

How was it the boy enjoyed himself so thoroughly? Why, because it is a glorious thing in this world to be able to help oneself. One acquires an indomitable and self-reliant spirit from such a procedure, and the greater the obstacles have been, the greater is the satisfaction afterwards. But one needs to have a little forethought, and with that Walter was not troubled—not a bit, not so much as the tip of his tilted little nose.

When the hut was ready he put on the black sheep-skin coat, donned the gaily feathered sugar-loaf cap, and fixed on his wonderful beard of flax. He then seated himself on the tree-trunk, with his elbows on his stone table, and felt as if he had just been crowned king over the whole forest. What a pity he had no looking-glass, for he appeared really terrific where he sat, musing how he should govern his new-founded kingdom. He had worked very hard, and his own little stomach was the first to become rebellious, for it was very hungry. Bread

and cheese would now have tasted like tarts, but he had already demolished his provisions. He then determined to do as Robinson had done—go out into the wood and gather coconuts.

Strange to say, there were no such things growing in the whole wood. The Crusonian purveyor scanned the trees wistfully, but they had nothing to offer except hard scaly fir-cones. In lieu of better he tried one, but as it tasted of nauseous turpentine he soon threw it away.

“Never mind,” thought Walter, “I’ll bring down a llama instead, and have a fine breakfast.”

He took his bow and arrows accordingly, and went out to the chase. No animal of that kind was to be seen; but a hare scampered off, quick as thought, in amongst the brushwood, and a pert little squirrel jumped with great agility from branch to branch. He first tried a shot at “pussy,” then at the saucy little pet in the trees; somehow he missed both. Quite vexed, he flung the bow aside.

Just then a little girl came along, driving some cows to graze on the lea.

"Please get me some milk, will you?" he said, for now his stomach was in open rebellion.

When the little girl beheld the shaggy monster, in the coat turned inside out, and a sugar-loaf head-gear, plentifully adorned with the war feathers, and the frightful beard, what else could the poor child think, but that Walter was some horrible mountain ogre?

He ran after her, and the little girl nearly fainted from sheer fright, when Walter was tripped up by his long sheep-skin coat, and in falling he got his nose scratched against a fallen birch-tree that lay in his path.

What availed it now that King Walter claimed the whole forest for his domain, when his majesty had nothing to eat. It was so early in the summer that the blue-berries were not ripe yet; but he was glad to find a few cranberries farther on, and that was all the young Robinson got to eat that day.

"I shall succeed better to-morrow," thought Walter; "I shall engage another 'man Friday,' and then there will be two of us to defend ourselves against the savages."

Then he made his bed of soft green moss, and,

hungry as he was, went to sleep with the black sheep skin pulled up over his ears.

His parents had in the meantime been searching for him everywhere, and couldn't make out what had become of the lad. They began to think that he had fallen into the lake, or become a prey to the wolves, when the little herd-lass came crying into the village, and told how she had seen a horrible big ogre in the forest hard by, all grim and shaggy, and with a giant's head, the shape of a big sugar-loaf. And there were plenty of superstitious folks, who firmly believed there were ghosts and goblins haunting the wood, so that the old cronies and dotards were almost as much frightened as the wee lassie herself. Some did not even dare to go out that day at all, while others looked timidly round every time they heard the wind sigh, or the branches rustle in the tall trees. But a few, who were braver, thought that it might be a runaway malefactor hiding in the wood, and accordingly they resolved to go during the night and try to capture him.

Walter knew nothing of all this, and he slept peacefully, away from all insolent cravings of his

empty stomach. When the hostile villagers found his hut, they approached it very cautiously, armed with pitchforks and spades, &c., and peeped carefully in.

"There lies the fellow asleep," said the men to one another.

"Stop a little," said one of them. "He is so shaggy; what if it be a bear!"

"Let us club him while he sleeps," proposed another of the cottagers, "or else he may get up and tear us to pieces!"

At this moment Walter was dreaming of the cannibals that went to Crusoe's island, and were going to broil him for supper. The dream was so vivid that he started up in great dread, and when at the same time he heard the unwelcome visitors say among themselves, "Let us club him while he sleeps," what could he think in the excitement of the moment, but that they were the real savages of Robinson's island, and had come to roast him. Brave as he was, his heart failed him now. He thought how abominable it was to be devoured by others just when he was so hungry himself; and then what would his dear parents and brothers and sisters say, when

they learnt what an awful fate had overtaken him, poor boy? As this thought crossed his mind he began to cry bitterly, and could only articulate in a faltering voice, "Please, good Master Cannibals, spare my life; I am not worth cooking, for I have had nothing to eat but a few cranberries for a long time!"

"Did you ever?" said one of the men. "Why, bless me, if it isn't young Walter, whom we sought for everywhere yesterday! Come out, you young urchin, and get home to your parents at once, or you'll find that in this wood grow plenty of lively switches!"

Walter was much crestfallen, and no less surprised were the simpletons who had taken him for a bear. They carried him off in triumph, and to make the procession more imposing, they kept him arrayed in the sheep-skin coat and the sugar-loaf headpiece.


His parents were so delighted when they got him back, that they forgot to chide him as severely as he deserved. "Naughty boy," they only said; "you have caused us great anxiety, but in having nothing to eat the whole day but cranberries, you have been sufficiently punished."

Walter kissed the hands of both his parents, and intended to have begged their forgiveness ; but really he couldn't, for he had his mouth full of a splendid bun fresh from the baker's. He thought to himself that cocoa-nuts and llamas were all very well, but at present he was ready to sell his kingdom of Crusoe for a piece of bread and butter. He felt rather abashed though, particularly after he had satisfied the cravings of hunger. I really don't know if I ought to tell you what he was up to the following night. Well, he stole once more out of the house, barefooted and silent, and again he ran away to the wood, where everything appeared almost as bright as daytime. He had brought matches with him, and now he put fire to his fir-twigh hut, which had been built but yesterday ; and he stood and gazed thoughtfully at the flames springing gaily upwards, and frightening the little birds that perched in the trees, causing them to hie away to avoid the noxious smoke ; and the sun which now was rising betimes, veiled his face with a cloud, in order not to get his bright beams tarnished. "There goes my castle !" thought Walter to himself.

Yes, there it was dissolving fast into smoke, as one's fondest hopes and expectations often do. Walter then sped home, and crept cautiously into his bed again in the cosy room ; but in spite of all he had suffered on his uninhabited island, he could not suppress (as he was pulling the bed-clothes over his head) a faint little sigh of " Happy Robinson Crusoe ! "



THE SNOWBALL BATTLE.

“OW we are going to have a war!” cried little Mathew, as he rushed into the hall, flushed with excitement, adorned with huge moustaches made by charcoal smut, a cock’s feather stuck in his cap, and brandishing his wooden sword!

“Heaven save us!” ejaculated old Sarah, who was sweeping the dining-room floor, and the news gave her such a fright that she felt so faint, and was nearly sitting down on the floor.

“What do you say, Master Mathew, are we going to have war?”

“That you may depend upon!” said the young fellow, proudly, and stuck his sword into the loop of his belt. “Yes, war! so that it will echo in the hills too! But I say, give me some bread

and butter first, there's a dear old soul, it is not the thing to go into battle with a hungry belly."

"Now you are joking, Master Mathew," Sarah resumed, not knowing exactly what to believe, and feeling rather frightened. "War, dear me, is a great scourge; and how cruel it is when people kill each other, and burn towns and hamlets, and trample on the growing corn in the fields! Perhaps the Turks have come at last!"

"Yes, of course they have," said Mathew, appropriating some large slices of bread and butter from the cupboard, and munching heartily while talking. "The whole yard is crowded with Turks," he continued, with his mouth full; "but just you wait a bit, we will soon scatter them to the winds. We defy them to capture our fortress, 'Dreadnought!'"

"Well, I'm blessed if I understand all this," said old Sarah, and gathering up her sweepings in the pan, she hastened out to the yard. The old woman was curious to know what it all meant, and what was going on outside; so she opened the back door all in a tremble, and saw—the whole yard filled with boisterous school-boys, and that in a corner against the railings was built a

miniature fortress of snow, on the top of which was placed as a standard a red kerchief fixed on a tall hop-pole. The old woman muttered "talk of old Nick," and then returned indoors with her pan, in quite a pet. She did not observe that behind the palings were gathered a whole army of eager warriors, measuring on an average about 3 feet 6 inches, and all distinguished with the sign of a paper half-moon, pinned on their backs, this supposed to be the most appropriate place for a decoration. These were evidently the Turks, busily engaged in casting shot, that is to say, forming hard snow-balls, and piling them up in pyramids against the walls.

The Christian crusaders were all assembled in the yard, and each carried as an emblem a sprig of spruce-fir stuck in the button-hole of his jacket.

"Where is the General?" asked one of the Christian officers, with an anxious glance at the side whence they expected the enemy.

"He is having some bread and butter in the pantry, I believe, sir," replied one of the soldiers, saluting the captain in a military fashion.

"Dear me! is this the time for a general to munch bread and butter, when the foe is advancing?" said the Captain, knitting his eyebrows.

"Sir," observed the warrior, proudly, "you will remember that was just what General Sandels did when he gained the battle of ——"

"How dare you answer?" said the Captain, angrily, cutting him short; "you, a simple cornet! away at once with my orders to the General, that he instantly quit the pantry," he commanded in a stern voice.

"All right, Captain," answered the cornet.

But the General appeared at this moment on the doorsteps. The first thing he caught sight of was the red banner on the battlements.

"Who has dared to hoist a blood-coloured flag on our fortress of 'Dreadnought'?" he demanded, in a voice of thunder. No answer came.

"Sir General," answered the Captain at last, rather abashed, "I borrowed it from the scullery-maid, and made her allowance from the commissariat. Really I couldn't help that the kerchief happened to be red."

“Captain,” said the chief, somewhat appeased, “you don’t understand the colour of flags any more than a blind bat! Surely we are not pirates, or buccaneers, that we must show a red flag! Let me tell you, blue and white are our true colours, deep blue as our lakes, and white the symbol of our snowy fields.”

And the General hastily produced from the breast-pocket of his coat a blue and white flag, which the day before his sister had tacked together from some shreds of bunting.

The corsair standard was on the instant lowered, and soon the blue and white banner floated proudly on the top of the hop-pole in its place.

“The Turks are coming!” cried the sentinel; “everybody to his post!”

Now great activity was displayed by the Christian army, which was parted in three divisions: two columns were despatched to the gate, to take up their position one on each side, to welcome the enemy with a terrific storm of shot; and the third hastened into the fort to arrange the batteries and repair the ramparts where the snow had crumbled. The General kept a stern eye on everybody, and anyone who

was not sharp enough, got a ruthless punch in the ribs, to stimulate him to activity. But Fritz, the little drummer, who did not feel inclined to risk his young life of only seven winters in the pending conflict, dropped his drumsticks from sheer fright, and retreated into the dog-kennel.

The Turks mustered nearly twice the force of the Christians, so they pressed on with great courage through the gate.

Hurrah! now whizzed the first volley—phuff! pugh! puff!

The Turks wavered for a moment, and their cadets began to cry. But their chief, Dschingis Khan, a tall ringleader, premier of the upper form, knew how to rally them. A perfect cannonade of snowballs rained upon the Christian army, who in vain turned up their coat-collars to shield themselves from the furious attack, and in their turn began to waver.

This was the decisive moment of the battle, when the drum was of the greatest importance! But the drum! the drum which would have instilled new courage into the wavering columns, was silent. If the Christians had only heard the beating of the drum, they would have been sure.

to have carried the day. But the General called in vain, in agony, upon his missing drummer. The little rascal lay silent and unseen, he had taken sanctuary in the dog-kennel.

“The traitor !” cried the General, fearful in his wrath, but nothing came of it. The enemy stormed through and swarmed into the yard, and though the Christians manfully defended every inch of ground, they were at last forced to retreat before the terrific onslaught of the overwhelming masses of the enemy, and take refuge within the walls of the fortress.

The General was beside himself with rage. The victorious Turks cheered lustily, and carried off in triumph the spoils of war found on the battle-field, consisting of a boot, two tin sabres, seven caps, and fourteen or fifteen mittens, all odd ones.

A short truce now ensued, and then the Turkish Pacha treated his victorious Bashee-Bazouks to a feast of almond-rock, at the expense of his commissariat. Then he sent one of his dragomans to parley with the Christian commander, and insolently demanded him to give up the fortress unconditionally. In case of refusal,

every man would have to run the gauntlet, which meant, to lay down on the snow-covered ground and pretend to be killed.

The cornet, who had scaled the battlements from within, of course, thought this an awful insult, that he, without waiting for orders, seized a snowball lying on the battery, took a sure aim, and hit the insolent herald right between the eyes, and knocked his fez off, and the infidel took to his heels as fast as he could.

“It is against all recognised laws of warfare,” cried Dschingis Khan, disgusted.

“Very likely!” shouted the cornet; “but here, might is right!” and at the same moment sent another snowball whizzing close to the ears of the proud conqueror, who had to duck his head ingloriously to save his skin.

“Well done, cornet!” called out the General’s well-known voice. “If anybody dares to talk of surrendering, he shall be shot on the instant! Cornet, I appoint you lieutenant on the spot!” and here the commander raised his voice, so as to be heard all over the battle-field. “But the drummer-boy is a craven miscreant! and I relegate him to the baggage service!”

“Brave Mussulmans!” bawled Dschingis Khan; “you have heard how the braggart mouthed it. I will not pay you, because that is not my habit; but behind the boarding is still a basket of almond-rock provision, and the first man who scales the fortress ramparts, I will give him, as true as my name is Dschingis Khan, the whole of its contents!”

“Hurrah! long live our Dschingis Khan!” shouted the Turkish hordes, and they simultaneously stormed the fort.

But “Dreadnought” was not so easily taken possession of, as was the surrounding open district of the yard. Volleys of snowballs whizzed about their ears, incessant as a hail-storm. Now fell a Turk, and then another was sent head over heels down from the battlements. Ammunition ran short, and indeed could no longer be used, for now the belligerents closed in upon one another and fought man to man, sparring, and then rolling down the ramparts, locked in each others struggling embrace. The walls of the fort suffered great damage in the fearful strife, and big breaches were soon effected. Some of the Bashee-Bazouks even pulled their antagonists by

the hair on the quiet, though this was against the conventional laws of civilised warfare, and could not even boast of being might for right.

The General and his soldiers performed prodigies of valour, though in the fray they had been despoiled of caps and mittens ; yea, some even lost their boots. They kept their hold stoutly to the last man, but alas ! the Turks were so numerous, and—there was no help for it—they gained at last the ascendancy. The General himself was taken prisoner ; the banner was torn down, and the victorious enemy was already swarming up and all over the battlements, when—was heard—the beat of the drum !

At this unexpected signal, the Turks lost all presence of mind ; they understood in a moment that reinforcements were coming up in the rear to the relief of the distressed fort, and in great panic they flung themselves headlong down the ramparts, and took to their heels, and did not rally until they were a good way beyond the gate, which was naturally considered the frontier of the domains of the “ Sublime Porte.”

The General and his men, though in a sad plight, soon extricated themselves from the

crumbling ruins of the fortress, and could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw little Fritz coming, quite alone across the yard, and composedly beating his drum. But when he came up to where the General stood in surprise surrounded by his staff, he saluted and knelt down in penitence before him, and said :

“If you please, sir, I am ready to be shot ! I know I deserve it ! for I deserted my comrades, when the enemy bore down upon us. I prefer to be shot, rather than be reduced to the baggage service ! I heard all you said about me, General, where I lay hid in the dog-kennel, and it smote me to the heart ! It is true I was afraid of the Turks ; but I fear more being called a coward ! so I bit my lips firmly, and determined to find my drumsticks, which I soon did amongst the snow, and I said to myself, ‘ They may beat me, but I’ll beat the drum first ! but la ! they all ran away as fast as they could instead ! ’ ”

The General gently lugged the ears of the drummer-boy, then lifted him up, and gave him a smacking kiss, so delighted was he.

“Comrades,” he said, “the drummer Fritz has saved the fortress of ‘Dreadnought,’ and all

of us from massacre. Before our whole army I solemnly declare that drummer Fritz is a first-rate honest fellow. Let him only grow a head taller, and no kennel will hold him ; and let me tell you, he will never hide again anywhere as long as he lives. And shame upon anyone who, in the hour of danger, deserts the noble fortress of 'Dreadnought !' But honour be to him who prefers to be shot, rather than throw away his drumsticks when his duty is to save his own country ! ”



THE OLD HUT.



UILT on the very top of that high hill, far above the surrounding tree-tops, indeed, higher than any other part of the island, was a small log hut, but which, at the time of my story, was so old that no one even knew when it had been built. It had never been painted, nor had the walls ever been shingled, and the worm-eaten logs looked as if they were ready to tumble out of the walls. In the windows was not a single pane of glass, only little fragments here and there. The chimney had long ago fallen down, and the reason why the fire-place had not done the same was, because it was strongly constructed of big, heavy stones.

which defied the ravages of time. In the flooring were large holes which the rats and mice had gnawed in those days when they expected to find something worth pilfering in the hut.

The whole presented a decayed and sorry appearance, and the bare black walls of the interior were covered with smut, dust, and cobwebs. Furthest away, in the darkest corner of the room, half-hidden by the old-fashioned two-storied bedstead—constructed like a press in the wall, and reaching to the ceiling—shimmered something so pretty and glowing, nobody could tell what it was, whether gold or silver, pearl or gem, or a beaming glance of the setting sun, stealing in through a chink of the wall, as if for the sake of heightening the effect of its own beauty it loved to show itself surrounded by a dark frame; or perhaps it was a fire-drake guarding a hidden treasure; or maybe it was the good little gnome of the place, who had lighted his lantern in his tranquil abode.

No; I will tell you what it was! It was neither sun nor gold, nor gem nor busy sprite: 'twas only a piece of old timber which from age and damp had so decayed that it now shone with

phosphorescent light, as old wood sometimes does in the dark ; that was all.

But I have also an opinion of my own on the subject. I believe that the happy recollection of all the kind words, merry jests, joy and grace which formerly had dallied within the four walls of the hut, still lingered in its darkest corner, and glowed with life at the gladdening thoughts of the past. I verily believe that the old log timbers in the walls beamed with joy, and that it was its bright merry sparkle which glimmered in the dull distance. For really, if you knew all that these old walls had witnessed in their day you would entertain the same belief as I do. This hut was formerly the only one on the beautiful isle, and then its door was never closed, inviting rich and poor alike, the sorrowful in mind, and the merry ones, and all equally shared its hospitality when overtaken by storm, and all were glad to find shelter under its roof when it rained, and to cook the silver-scaled perch in the common pot that hung in the fire-place ; and it also afforded soft beds of new-mown hay, for the weary to slumber on during the blithe and bright summer nights.

Here were to be seen, the whole summer through, joyous groups of townspeople and visitors from all the country round. Here they lived together without any etiquette or show. Coffee, for which all clubbed together, was made in the burnished copper pot; all participated in the games and sports, and all slept in their dresses on the straw strewn on the floor for the purpose, while in the two-storied bedstead lay the elders on fragrant hay; they, of course were supposed to be the nobility—elevated, forsooth—and dreaming on their soft eider down.

All the jests and jokes and witty repartees and merry teasings, and delightful fun which these old walls have witnessed—well, it is impossible to describe them.

But now the hut was desolate and tumbling down, and of its former inhabitants none remained but the midges and gnats, who when the hut was at the height of prosperity were the only unwelcome guests. When people who loved to sleep in peace used to visit it, they were wont to light large twigs of juniper in the fire-place, and cover the top of the chimney, so that the hut soon became filled with the smoke of the fragrant

shrub, and which the insects did not at all relish. But now they were left undisturbed to dance their quadrilles in the sunlight which poured through the shattered windows; and if these never had a feast on youthful glowing blood, they lived in no dread of the fatal juniper smoke and the gnats and midges which now existed boasted of being great-great-grandchildren in the seventieth generation or more removed from their ancestors who used to frequent the old hut in the joyous days of its youth. They had inherited the same love for the place of their birth, and liked no place so well, though their only fare were sunbeams, with an occasional cooling draught of summer winds.

The old hut had been abandoned of late years because now-a-day a number of comfortable abodes had been built on the island, and in which lived those who could afford to spend the summer in the country. Some of these dwellings resembled miniature palaces, furnished as they were with all the luxuries of ease and comfort of the new age. They were surrounded by gardens and parterres, and trimly-kept avenues, and when anyone wanted to please the

owner of one of them he had to feign surprise at the general arrangement and beauty of everything, and declare that "he had never seen anything so beautiful as his 'villa,' surrounded by such a charming wild woodland and bordered by the smiling sea." At this the envied owner of the villa would smile complacently, and with elegant carelessness observe, "that it was not such a difficulty after all, for when one has the means of calling in decorators and gardeners, and other masters of the various crafts, from the town, and workmen to cut down the forest trees, and twine and trim here and there and everywhere, and when one can expend a good deal of money, what seems at first impossible is very soon an accomplished fact."

All the new villas had pretty names, such as "Rosevale," "Sanssoucé," "The Laurels," &c. People lived there in the same manner as in town; they called upon each other, gave musical parties, and even the green card-tables were countenanced, and nine-pins, and merry-go-rounds flourished exceedingly well.

When anybody took a walk it was only on gravelled paths, and across gaudy Chinese bridges

which spanned the impertinent rustic brooks ; but into the fragrant wood they seldom went, only when the cranberries glowed tauntingly on their stems, or the strawberries blushed enticingly on the hill-sides. Then the young ladies would loop up their dresses coquettishly, and trip off with pretty little baskets for an hour or two's adventure amongst the brambles, while the young gentlemen would set sail in their neat little white crafts, decked out with flags and streamers, and they would race round and meet the young girls at a rocky promontory, when they would gallantly compare them to dryades and water-witches, and would beg hard that they would not bewitch them so cruelly with their smiles and wiles.

In one of the finest villas, boasting the name of "Albano," lived two young girls, Antonia and Mary, with their parents ; both were lithe, beautiful, and happy, both merry and light-hearted—but in a different way. Antonia, with her gay and buoyant heart, eagerly entered into the pleasures of each day, and lived in the merry moments of its fleeting mirth ; while Mary's warm heart was more susceptible to the wrongs and ills of others, which made her even sprightlier at

times than her sister, and, which was but natural, she was also sadder sometimes.

Besides their parents, their brothers and sisters, and the servants, who had all come out to live at the villa for the summer, there was also living in a small room on the second storey their old grandmother, who reckoned fourscore years and ten, and was quite blind. Of their daily life she scarcely knew or recollected anything, but what had occurred generations ago she knew perfectly well. She whiled away the time by feebly singing hymns, and was no burden to anyone. Every morning the long string of children entered and kissed the old dame's hand, and smiled furtively to each other while she at least for the hundredth time asked each and all their names and ages. Mary was, of all the children, the one who loved her grandmother most, and her name was the only one which the old lady retained in her mind. Her brothers and sisters therefore, in jest, called her "Old Grandmother," "for you are just like her," they said, "when she sits in her high-backed easy chair." And though Mary loved her granny dearly, she could not keep from looking at her

wrinkled forehead and her wizened cheeks, and when her playmates to tease her said "You are so like old Granny!" she could scarcely help crying.

When the old dame heard this, where she sat listening to their play, she tried to console her faithful Mary, saying, "Never mind, Polly; you only look at my portraiture." For in the elegant drawing-room of their town residence were two ancient paintings in oblong gold frames. The one represented a young gentleman of thirty years in powdered wig and bag, a coat of the small-clothes fashion with large steel buttons, lace cuffs, and a fine shirt-frill of the same material. And by his side in the other picture appeared a beautiful and laughing young face of twenty summers, with hair combed straight up, a spencer with a long and tight-fitting bodice, a farthingale of a bright and large patterned brocade, and with long delicate ruffles falling over the arms, which were bare. On both the frames was inscribed, "A.D. 1775." They were the portraits of Grandfather and Grandmother, painted at Stockholm shortly after their marriage. Grandfather had been dead a long time,

but the young and beautiful lady with the saucy and yet so good-natured a smile, with the dainty dimples in the faint blushing cheeks, and the ardent and womanly soul that looked out of those tender azure eyes was—that same blind old dame, verging on a hundred years of age, seated in her lonely chamber, grey and wizened, with wan and feeble hands—yes, it was dear old Granny of more than seventy years ago. She thought still of the blithe and happy days of her youth, when she listened to many a flattering compliment to her beauty, and she could, therefore, artlessly and good-humouredly, without any bitter feeling, or lamenting the decay of all earthly favours, say: “Don’t you cry, Polly, dear; you just look at my portraiture.”

The sun rose one morning from his mystic bed in the sea, glowing like a copper shield, and the day soon became scorching hot. Mary and Antonia took their little baskets and went into the woods to gather cranberries. The tranquil landscape basked joyously in the generous sunshine, while birch and lime-trees offered cool shades to the wanderers. The big luscious berries glowed from beneath thick clusters of

leaves that nearly hid them in plenteous foliage. Such splendid cranberries they had never seen before, swelling with delicious juice. The further they went over the hill and brake, crossing the unmown fragrant meadows, the more cranberries they found, and their baskets began to fill rapidly. It was a delightful work, and they continued their fruit harvest until late in the afternoon.

"It is really time to go home now; I am quite baked with the heat of the sun," said Antonia.

"We will only continue a little longer," said Mary; "I only want about twenty more and my basket will then be quite full." And they proceeded further amongst the tussocks.

"I have never been here before," said Antonia. "Look at that tumble-down old hut yonder amongst the trees; it looks as if it were the habitation of some gnome or old hermit. What if this pretty place be the haunt of goblins and fays?"

"The hut is wretchedly decayed, certainly," Mary replied; "but we ought not to despise anything because it is old and ugly. Granny is

also old and wizened, and yet she is so kind, and has been a perfect beauty in her young days."

"How you do talk about an old ruin!" said Antonia, laughing. "But now we must go home, for it is my turn to preside at the tea-table to-night."

"Easier said than done! In what direction are we to go?"

"Come this way—to the left."

"No, you are mistaken; we ought to go to the right."

"No, no; we came from that side."

"Yes; but before that we were always keeping to the left."

"It strikes me, Mary, that we have lost our way."

"That's my opinion too, sister."

"What had we better do?"

"Let's follow the sea-shore and we shall be sure to come to 'Albano' at last."

"Yes, to-morrow morning! Don't you know that the island is many miles round?"

"Oh, dear me, and it is beginning to rain!"

"Look what a great black cloud is darkening the sun! A storm is coming on."

“Hark! a clap of thunder!”

“Did you see that flash of lightning, Antonia?”

“What huge raindrops are falling—big as berries!”

“And to think of our new dresses!”

The two young girls now ran off as fast as they could, without any certain goal in view. The rain poured down in torrents, flashes of lightning came sharp and frequent, and in the clouds rolled the mighty thunder, like the rumbling sound of wheels when a heavy car is driven in fury along a stony street. It was indeed a fearful storm.

“I can’t go a step further,” gasped Antonia, quite exhausted, wet through, and pale as a sheet with fear.

“Let us stop here under this tall birch,” Mary proposed.

“No, no; certainly not! Don’t you know that the lightning frequently splits high trees?”

“Yes, true; we must run further.”

And away they ran again; but after awhile they found themselves in exactly the same place from where they started! The poor girls were

greatly bewildered, and Antonia clung to a tree-trunk, saying, "I can't go a step further, if the lightning even splits this tree!" And Mary began to cry.

The heavy thunder-cloud now dispersed for a moment, and the girls saw that they were close to the crumbling gable of the old hut. "Come along!" Mary called out, and in a few seconds they had found shelter.

Why, Antonio had but a little while ago spoken very contemptuously about this dilapidated old hut! True, it was in a sad plight, and out of order, and could not, of course, be compared to "Albano," but it offered a very welcome shelter against the storm, and if one did not go near the corners where the rain drizzled in through the roof, one might feel very safe and comfortable.

"It is very cosy indeed here," said Mary, smiling. She was always content with little. "Look here—the good little gnome of the place has evidently expected visitors, for he has scattered fresh birch-leaves on the floor to perfume the room. Ah, now it may rain and thunder just how it likes, we needn't care; the old hut

has weathered many a storm before, I dare say."

"Some fishermen must have been here before us to-day," observed Antonia; "and very likely they will return soon. See here! they have left a stewing-pan in the fire-place, and look! there lies the head of a perch. I wish we could light a little fire to dry our clothes by."

"We'll try; there are still some live embers among the ashes; fan the flame, Antonia. Ah, good! there it goes—now the sticks and shavings have caught hold; they burn splendidly. Quick, here is some more dry wood; we shall soon have a beautiful blaze! One more big lump of wood—there! I told you this was a cosy place."

While Mary chattered thus to keep up her sister's spirits, she succeeded in making up a bright fire; the dry branches crackled merrily and sent bright sparks flashing about, as if in high glee, and after a short time the girls had managed to dry their clothes, and spoke of setting out again on chance to find their way home; but the rain was still pouring down, and it was impossible under such circumstances to start out upon unknown and untrodden paths,

amongst the high and wet grass. No ; there was nothing for it but to wait patiently for the storm to end. But time soon began to drag heavily with the busy girls, and they began to explore the unknown regions of the hut, for who could tell what they might find ?

Antonia discovered on the dim and dirty old walls many verses, some tender and loving, others utterly ridiculous, which the laughter-loving girl recited with serio-comic gravity. One of them ran thus,—

“ Pretty girl ! sweet as a sugar-plum !
I wish I was your shadow dun ! ”

Below which some waggish young poetaster had written,

“ You ought to have a thrashing, just for fun ! ”

Another ebullition said,—

“ I have also spent a day
In this Arcadian shealing ;
But onward now I ’ll take my way,
Because my heart has found no healing.”

“ Truly heart-rending ! ” mocked Antonia ;
“ but here is another little verse which one really could feel sympathy with :

“ Farewell !—forget me not,
Howe’er perverse my fate ;
My thoughts recall this cot,
And thee, Sophie-Beate ! ’ ’ ”

“ Beate-Sophie ? why they are Grandmother’s Christian names ! ” said Mary with astonishment.

“ There might have been many more of the same name,” replied Antonia, and continued her recitations from the wall until twilight came on, when the two sisters again seated themselves by the fire.

“ Well,” sighed Mary.

“ What is it ? ” asked Antonia.

“ We must remain here all night ; we dare not venture out in the wood again in this horrible thunder and rain ; we should only lose our way a second time, and in the dark night too ! ”

“ Yes, we must remain,” sighed Antonia ; “ but I am so hungry.”

“ I can get you something,” said Mary, who was always equal to any emergency. “ I have read in some book that the Arabs in the desert often satisfy themselves with a handful of boiled rice for supper.”

“Hadn’t you better make soup on a skewer! —there might be one lying about here,” jested Antonia.

“Just you wait a bit, and I’ll show you.” And with this Mary took from her pocket a quantity of rice, which she carried about to munch dry, as is the custom of school-girls; then she cleaned the pot very carefully, and put it out in the rain to catch a little water, after which she put the rice into it and hung the pot on the fire. The rice was soon cooked; then she pressed some cranberry juice into the dish, which made it very nice indeed.

“You are not easily beaten,” said Antonia.

The two sisters then selected the cleanest bed in which was fresh new hay, very crisp and dry; then they barred the door as well as they could, and lay down to rest, when Antonia soon slept soundly.

Mary, however, did not get a wink of sleep: she thought of their parents’ anxiety when they found their daughters did not return; she thought of old Granny, and of the little verse to Sophie Beate, and of many other things which flit through a young girl’s brain when she

cannot sleep. She tried all the tricks and artifices she knew of to beguile sleep to touch her eye-lids; she thought of the most tiresome person she knew, the snuffy old Alderman who always wanted to kiss her with his big ugly lips. She also counted from one to three hundred and thirty-three, but all in vain.

At last she turned round in bed, and lay staring into the dark corner opposite. Then she saw something glimmer like a piece of live coal, and yet its shimmer was whiter than dying embers. What could it be? "Have I really been so careless as to drop a hot cinder there?" she thought to herself. She really must get up and look. She went to the place. No; happily it was not fire; it was only the decayed old timbers that glimmered with phosphorescent light in the dark corner. Mary looked at it for awhile with great interest; then she observed quite near another small luminous spot in the old log, which glittered even more intensely white. "That is also phosphorescent wood," she thought, and felt it with her fingers—but no, it was a little ring which had been pressed firmly into a small chink of the wall. She picked it out

with some difficulty, and saw in the dusky light of the place that the shimmer was caused by a small diamond which was set in the collet. A treasure-trove ! It tried her patience sorely that she could not more closely examine the ring for want of light, but she put it on her finger and returned to bed. Now sleep did not tarry long before he touched her eye-lids.

You have heard of the fairy-land of sleep ? Well, there Mary found herself at home, as all good children do, and the golden seraphs of dreamland fluttered with azure wings over her bed. They took her by the hand, and to her they brought back the records of time more than seventy years, and she beheld her grandmother in her sweet girlhood of seventeen, joyous, happy, smiling, and pretty as Mary herself. . . . She is seated in this same old hut, in which Mary now sleeps, but how pretty was the hut then ! neat, new, and trim ; and by the side of Grandmother in her teens stands a handsome young fellow of twenty, dressed as a sailor. They are sorting cranberries, and they look into each other's eyes—what beaming full eyes ! Are those Grandmother's eyes ? Yes, yes ! but three-

score and ten years ago ! The handsome young sailor now seizes her hand, kisses it fondly, and rushes out of the hut down to the shore, where he embarks in a vessel and sails far away beyond the seas. And oh, how bitterly old Grandmother weeps (I say *old* Grandmother simply from force of habit, and yet then she was only seventeen years of age !). How she sobs, that beautiful, angelic girl, enough to break her heart. Now her brothers and sisters also come into the hut, all carrying baskets full of cranberries ; they surround old Gran,—their darling sister ; they try to comfort and gladden her ; they even press her to dance, but she only sobs and weeps and gazes wistfully across the great blue sea, that seems to blend with heaven itself far away in the north.

Mary awoke, and looked around. . . . The young girl who cried so bitterly had vanished ; so had the brave young sailor, and the pretty interior of the hut. In their home at "Albano" was her dear blind old Granny, fourscore and ten years old, longing for her, while she lay in the dilapidated old hut, which might tumble down any moment. Her young heart throbbed

with strange emotions, but she soon sank again into the friendly embrace of the dreams, who now carried her seventy years forward into futurity. . . . What is this—not the island surely? Yes; but how changed, and yet the same, withal! The old hut has been swept away, and not a trace left behind, and no one is aware even that it ever existed. Mary alone knows it. Where the hut and the villas once stood, and indeed all over the once verdant isle, are now built streets and many lofty edifices; vehicles of all sorts traverse the thoroughfares in all directions, and crowds of people are hastening to and fro; there is life, and din, and traffic everywhere. The old town has been removed from its former site on the coast, to this island, and since this has been effected it has become four times larger, and populous, and thriving. May be; but where are now the luscious cranberries, and the loved and winged songsters of the tranquil woodlands? They have been scared away by the din of the city, and they do not feel at home in the trimmed gardens which have been planted along the coast. Look,—there sits a very old woman surrounded by her great-grand-

children ; she is lame in one of her feet, and can no longer walk, so she is wheeled in an invalid-chair ; she is quite deaf, but still she is not blind, like old Grandmother was. How kind and amiable she looks in her extreme old age ! Who may she be ? Mary looks at her in her dream, scans her face closely, loves her, kisses her hands, but knows her not. Then a voice whispers in her ears : “ ’Tis yourself, Mary—seventy years hence ! ” This startles Mary in her light sleep, and she feels again such a strange pressure at her heart. Tears of love and sorrow press into her eyes, but she cannot weep ; she feels herself so decrepit and old, hoary with age ; she herself is the deaf and lame old Granny, fourscore and ten, who is seated in the invalid-chair, and she looks back, far back into by-gone times : she points to the spot where formerly the old hut stood, and where now is erected a small summer-house, with pink silk curtains in the windows, and a pennon streaming from a pole in the steep roof ; and she says to her great-grandchildren, “ Here stood formerly a dilapidated old hut, which treasured many sweet recollections within its four walls. One

hundred and forty years ago stood in this place my own grandmother, and bade farewell to a brave young sailor lad, who sailed away over the seas and never returned; and seventy years ago, when I myself was young and light-hearted, my sister Antonia and I lost our way in the wood. We slept during the night in the old hut, and I found a ring there—I was only seventeen years old then.” And the child who stood nearest the young and pretty Mary—no (how I entangle myself!)—I mean the deaf, lame, and wizened old lady of fourscore and ten—the child looked up astonished at her grand-dame in the invalid chair, naïvely saying, in the simplicity of her innocence, “Nay, is it possible that Granny has ever been only seventeen years old!”

Mary experienced again a strange pressure at her heart, and saw a haze descend over the summer-house with the pink curtains, and the pennon flying aloft, and it enveloped all objects, even the old dame in her invalid-chair, and the little children who prattled by her side. And Mary awoke at the same time, and felt hot tears trickling down her cheeks. Dismayed, she rose. Was she really as old and decayed and wizened

as she had seen herself in the invalid-chair? No, no! she was yet young and buoyant, and her cheeks were soft and warm and rosy. She looked at her hands—they were white and dainty as ever. Yes! she was still only seventeen; and what she had seen—and which had touched her heart with emotion and evoked her tears—was all a dream!

Was it all a dream?

Yes, for joyous sunbeams darted in through the shattered panes of the windows, and lit up the dim and grey old hut. The thunder had rolled away, with the heavy rain-clouds in its train, and a lovely fragrance was wafted from the neighbouring copse through the open window. Mary passed her hand over her forehead. "It was a dream!" she said softly to herself; "but what a dream!"

Antonia still slept soundly. Mary awoke her with a kiss. They were soon prepared to bid the old hut farewell; they tucked up their skirts, for the grass was still very wet; but they had not gone far, before they saw a boat nearing the shore, in which was seated their anxious father, who had himself started in search of his lost

ones. Within an hour they found themselves again in their home of Albano.

Antonia had a great deal to tell when she returned home, about the storm and thunder, the tumble-down old hut, and the ridiculous verses she had recited from the bare walls. But Mary went immediately to her Granny, embraced her, and kissed her feeble old hands, expressing her fond love in many winsome ways. She could not forget her dream; she thought to herself, "What I am now, Grandmother has once been; what Grandmother now is, I shall become one day!" When she thought of the handsome sailor, who departed for ever across the seas, she also remembered—well—I won't say who, but she began speculating how seventy years hence she would recollect him, and all these happy days of her youth, which were now passed in mirth and joy. Tears forced themselves again into her soft eyes; they were ever ready to come forward from their hiding-place, on the slightest occasion of joy or sorrow which their susceptible and easily moved mistress experienced.

"Do you know, Granny," she said, "that I have been to the old hut? Your name was

inscribed on the walls, and I have dreamt strange things about you, Granny, the whole night !”

But the old dame heeded her not, she was holding the girl’s hand in her own, and closely scrutinizing the diamond ring on her finger.

“ The ring ! the ring ! ” she said, with trembling voice, “ where did you find that ring ? ”



“ I found it in the old hut, stuck in a chink of the wall ! ”

“ It is the right one ! ” exclaimed the old dame, and bent down and kissed it, and then threading it on her own wan finger ; “ thank you, dear child, it is the same, yes, the right one ! I

missed it yesterday, and sought it the whole day through, but it was impossible to find it. But now I have got it ! ”

“ Yesterday, Granny ! yesterday ! ”

“ Was it not yesterday ? No ; you are right, it must have been several weeks ago. It was the day *he* left me ! ”

“ Was it the handsome young sailor in the blue jacket ? ”

“ Yes, of course it was ! You know him, then ? ”

“ He who helped Grandmother to sort the cranberries when in the old hut, and who soon afterwards left for sea ? ”

“ Yes, the same, yes. Perhaps you know not that we loved each other dearly ; we had played together when we were little children, he was but three years older than I, he was like a brother to me, but he loved me even more ardently than a brother could have done a sister. When he left for sea a few weeks ago, he said at parting : ‘ Beate-Sophie, you do not love me as fervently as I do you. I leave now for foreign lands, and, perhaps, may never return ; but here in this hut I have hidden away the ring I showed you

yesterday; it is yours! When once you carry the ring on your finger, it will be a token that I shall soon return to you; but if you do not succeed in finding it, we shall never meet again!"

"Did you search for the ring, Granny?"

"Did I search for it? Night and day, day and night, but I found it not; I searched every summer in succession, but he never returned! Tell me, dear child, perhaps it is a long time since he left? Perhaps many months?"

"Oh, Granny dear, it is more than seventy years ago!"

"Seventy years, child! Ah! true; I had forgotten. That day to me is but as yesterday; everything that has occurred since has passed by me as the waters of a stream, and I am left alone dreaming on the shore. Tell me, child, what is there traced on the inside of the ring?"

"1772, I come to thee!"

"He comes to me! Yes, I know now; he comes to meet me in the bright regions which know no parting, and '*I come to thee*' soon—very soon—and then he will come to meet me!"

"No, Granny, you must not die, and leave us!"

"Don't grieve, child; the longest day has its evening, as well as the shortest one. But it matters not whether time has been long or short, so we know each hour alone brings us nearer to heaven. Then the evening is hailed with joy, and the night brings rest and peace; and the dawn of eternal day rises triumphantly over the dispersing shadows of our past life."

Thus spoke old Granny, with that unconquerable faith which only those possess who in the storms of life have clung to the anchor of heavenly hope. When the next summer had come, soft green grass was already growing on her grave, reminding the beholder that a new existence had begun. Antonia and Mary with their parents visited the island again, about the same time in August.

"Come, Antonia," said Mary, "let us see if the old hut still remains."

"Very well," answered her sister; "but this time we will observe some landmarks, so that we don't lose our way again." Then they proceeded up the island.

When they arrived at the beautiful hill near the sea, they found that the old hut was gone; it had finally tumbled down before the fury of the storms that raged in November. Some of the timbers had been carried away, whilst those logs that were most worm-eaten and decayed, were allowed to remain, together with the big flat stone in the fireplace, on which the girls had cooked their supper. The gnats and midges danced as of yore; they did not abandon their friend, even in its complete ruin, and the setting sun shed a rose-coloured light over the crumbling mass, under which were buried many sweet memories of the past.

“What do I behold?” exclaimed Antonia. “In ruins! The good little gnome of the place will now want a new home; he had better remove to Albano with us!”

Mary did not listen to all this, she was gazing at the desolation, the crumbled fabric, which the fiery sun-rays gilded, shedding a bright radiance over the scene which begot hope of a bright future, and she said softly to herself: “Seventy years hence, here will stand a great city, with huge factories, and mighty shipping, and in that

very spot will stand a small summer-house, with pink silk curtains, and from the top will be a pennon floating in the air. No one will ever know then that on its foundations formerly stood an old hut, within whose four walls happy and excellent people have often spent many delightful hours. An old woman then will be the only one who knows anything about it."

"Come here, Mary, come!" Antonia called out at this moment; "the most splendid and delicious cranberries grow here, look how they glisten! what a delightful fragrance! There is nothing I enjoy better than really big ripe dark-crimson cranberries! What do you say, Mary?"

"No, nothing better! let us gather them," said Mary, with a sunny smile; and in that soft and transient expression of innocent joy was blended the history of the past, and the dream of the future.



STORM AND SUNSHINE.

A PLAY.



CHARACTERS.

The Raging Storm, personated by Master FRANK.

The Genial Sunshine, personated by Miss BLANCHE.

A poor Old Woman, personated by NURSE.

The Nursery is supposed to be the high road, traversing
a deep forest.

Time—between winter and spring, when the snow is melting and the birds begin to sing.

The Scene can be arranged anyhow ; suffice it that the snow is on the ground, and the singing of birds is heard by way of interlude.

Genial Sunshine is a little girl dressed in white, with a rose-coloured veil. She is seated on a cliff, eating away the snow around her. In her hand she holds a distaff, on which she is spinning a red silken thread. She looks a happy innocent little child, with very merry eyes.

Genial Sunshine (speaking).—I have just come back again to earth. What a time it seems since last I visited the verdant pine-forest, and flitted amongst the leafless branches of the birches ! How tedious the time was in the blue void. It was so straining to travel from star to star. My father King Sun has many children whom he sends to convey blessings to his subjects the planets and moons, and I am his little daughter destined for this globe. This very morning he said to me : “ Away, Genial Sunshine, and see you carry my message to the people of the earth.” Away I darted, first to Mercury, then to Venus, then to the moon, and then down here to *Terra*. It only took me about eight minutes to travel the whole distance. When I

approached the earth's atmosphere, heavy clouds opposed my passage, like a wall. I knew very well who had gathered them together. None but naughty, dark, curly-headed Frank Storm. I know him well, the saucy fellow! He is the wildest roysterer between heaven and earth. How I battered on the thick clouds! Did they give way? Not they! they massed themselves more firmly together, until at last, I looked at them very near, when something strange must have happened in the clouds, for the more intently I looked at them, the more they gave way, leaving an opening through which I at last darted to the earth. But what more shall I do here? To eat the snow around me is a tiresome occupation, if persisted in too long, an ice-pudding without any plums! Shall I nurse that young willow-tree, until it quickens into life again? I will try!

[She takes a twig of the willow and nurses it in her lap, singing]—

Sleep, sleep, willow young,
Still the winter reigns,
Birch and heather sleep in snows,
Also hyacinths and rose;

Spring must come and chase their foes,
And the ash-bloom to uncloze.
Sleep, sleep, willow young,
Still the winter reigns !

[*Speaks.*

But don't be sorry for that, young willow-child ! When I look at you, the sap begins to rise within your bark, and you feel a warm genial influence at the core of your heart, and the soft winds whisper to you, " Spring is coming ! "

[*Sings.*

The genial rays of summer-time,
From winter's power make free,
The radiant beams from heaven sublime,
Give beauteous bloom to thee.
Soon the woods in verdure clad,
Soon the flowers their buds will burst,
And all the earth in music glad,
Will sing with thee whom I have nurst.
Sunshine's eyes their beauty give !
Sunshine's power makes thee to live !
And then with all creation sing,
And make the heavens with praises ring !

[*Speaks.*

Yes, that you will. Why, what now, willow-child ! you spirt and sport soft downs already. Don't push on, no hurry, young saplings mustn't

try, like young striplings, to become early bearded ! Beware of raging Frank Storm ; before you are aware of it, he will shave you clean with his frosty razor, and you will be beardless as a baby again ! What did I tell you ? There he comes ! I hear his rattle-box already making a noise among the pine-tree tops !

The Storm.—Hey ! out of my way, ye twigs and fir-cones ! Onward ! forward ! upward ! I brook no delay ! The world is an old tortoise ! I'll quicken its speed !

[*Sings.*

Up in the air ! far o'er the waves !

Straight through the sky, on the wings of the clouds !
And the queen of bright morn, with her music staves,
Bids us behold the dispersing shrouds !

[*Speaks.*

What do I see ? Has Genial Blanche Sunshine again condescended to honour the world with her bright presence ? How broke you through my clouds, you dainty little thing ? I deemed not that your rose-tipped fingers had that strength !

G. Sunshine.—But I came spite of you ! You fancy yourself awfully strong ! quite invincible !

but there is something in the world still more powerful than you !

Storm.—Indeed ! what may that be, pray ?

G. Sunshine.—Myself !

Storm (rattles his box).—You ? Well ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ! How funny ! If you think yourself so strong, let us try at hook-finger !

G. Sunshine.—No, thank you ; but I'll lay you a wager !

Storm.—Don't you know that I can sweep down whole forests ?

G. Sunshine.—Aye, but I raise them up again !

Storm.—I toss the ocean waves against the clouds !

G. Sunshine.—But I assuage their wrath !

Storm.—I gather and chase the clouds !

G. Sunshine.—But I dissolve them !

Storm.—I cover the ground with whirling snowdrifts !

G. Sunshine.—And I melt the snow !

Storm.—I clear the world of noxious vapours !

G. Sunshine.—I make the world grow young again !

Storm.—I kill . . .

G. Sunshine.—But I revive !

Storm.—Look at that mite—what a mighty thing you have become !

G. Sunshine.—I don't boast, but I like to chastise blustering fellows.

Storm.—Well, what shall be our wager ?

G. Sunshine.—Yonder on the high-road comes a poor old woman. She is shivering with cold, and has wrapped herself in her shaggy old fur cloak. The one who can take the fur cloak from her has gained the wager.

Storm.—Agreed ! And as a trophy of victory the winner will be allowed to take a pen from the loser's pinion. Won't I pluck you, pert little Sunbeam, that's all !

G. Sunshine.—We shall see !

Enter poor Old Woman.

Storm.—Old crone ! where have you stolen that fur cloak from ?

Old Woman.—Heaven forfend, young Master, that I should steal. I am a poor honest woman, and the fur cloak is my own, let me tell you, proud young sir. I ought to know, since I made it from the skin of my poor old goat, who killed himself with too much bouncing fifteen years ago.

Storm.—What is that to me? I want your fur cloak, and if you don't give it to me I will lash you until the ragged old shag shall whirl about like a snowstorm.

Old Woman.—Help! help! Here's a young robber! Are there no police about?

Storm (trying to pull off the fur cloak).—Now I take your fur cloak, spite of you, little old woman.

Old Woman (struggling).—You had better leave me alone; there's fire in the old woman yet! To rob me of my own goat-skin—what! of the goat I reared myself! Robber! beware of my nails!

Storm (lets go his hold).—She's as savage as an old cat, and with nails as long and sharp as claws.

G. Sunshine.—Well, Master Storm, who is to win the wager?

Storm.—A hurricane itself could not tame such an old witch. She stems the current of the storm as nothing else in the world can like an old woman.

Old Woman (wrapping her fur cloak still firmer round her).—No windfall to you there, Master

Storm. Hue ! it is so cold that the very soul is nearly frozen to death in a poor old body like me.

G. Sunshine (pats the old woman's shoulder).—Do you feel very cold, poor old Mother ?

Old Woman (crossly).—What is that to you ? Leave me alone.

Storm.—Ha, ha ! genial little Sunshine, it is no use your trying.

G. Sunshine (to *Old Woman*).—You are so lonely, and no one in the whole world cares for you. Do you feel a little warmer now ?

Old Woman.—A bit better, thanks to the fur cloak.

G. Sunshine (looks into her eyes).—Yes, most likely the warmth comes from the fur cloak. Poor old Mother ! you have suffered greatly during this covere winter.

Old Woman.—Middling. There is plenty of fuel to be had in the forest, but the food has been very scant. You look like a good little girl : I feel quite warm at heart when you look thus at me with your merry little eyes.

G. Sunshine.—The heat comes from your fur cloak. It must have been a dear old goatie,

since he manages to warm you fifteen years after death!

Old Woman.—Yes, certainly the old goat is yet of great use, particularly in cold weather. But sometimes he warms me rather too much; most so when spring-time is at hand: then he makes me sweat.

Storm.—Beware old woman! she is a little rogue. She will steal your fur cloak yet.

Old Woman.—What are you driving at, Master Storm? Don't you think I am sharp enough to tell the difference between cold and heat?

G. Sunshine (looks at her).—Why is it so cold and dark in your lonely hut? You ought to keep a good little girl with you, who would love you with her whole heart, would stroke your grey hair, and smooth your wrinkled brow, would comfort you when you are sad, and play with you when you are merry, who would sing pretty little ditties to you, and warm your chilly hands in hers. Then you would never feel cold at heart again.

Old Woman (shading her eyes with her hands).—Dear me, how strange! the sunshine seems to dazzle my eyes, and penetrate into my very soul

when you talk that way. Oh, how warm I feel! Pugh! I can't stand it any longer. Take hold of the sleeve and help me; I must pull off my cloak. (*Pulls it off.*)

G. Sunshine.—Frank Storm, I have gained the wager. I must pluck your pinion.

Storm.—I acknowledge you the winner, but I can't make it out. Is there really anything in the world stronger than strength itself?

G. Sunshine.—Yes, yes—"Kindness!" Come with me, dear old woman, and be happy! I will light up your poor old hut with my brightest gold!



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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 5.5 million women employed in the public sector in 1995, compared with 4.5 million in 1980.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in its workforce. In 1995, 88% of the public sector workforce were women, compared with 78% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are full-time. In 1995, 68% of the public sector workforce were employed full-time, compared with 58% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are essential to the functioning of the state, such as those in the health and education sectors.

A third reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are well-paid. In 1995, the average salary of a public sector employee was £18,000, compared with £15,000 in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are in the higher grades of the public sector pay scale, such as those in the senior management and professional grades.

There are a number of other reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are secure. In 1995, 88% of the public sector workforce were employed on permanent contracts, compared with 78% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are essential to the functioning of the state, such as those in the health and education sectors.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are flexible. In 1995, 12% of the public sector workforce were employed on flexible contracts, compared with 2% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are in the lower grades of the public sector pay scale, such as those in the clerical and administrative grades.

A third reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are well-located. In 1995, 68% of the public sector workforce were employed in the London region, compared with 58% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are in the central government and local government sectors, which are both located in the London region.

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